



GOLDEN LEAVES
FROM THE
LATE ENGLISH
POETS ::

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LATE ENGLISH POETS.

THE GOLDEN LEAVES SERIES.

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IN UNIFORM VOLUMES



ROMANCE.

THE
LATE ENGLISH POETS

EDITED BY

RICHARD HENRY STODDARD.

WITH SIX ILLUSTRATIONS.



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P R E F A C E,

IF I have accomplished the object I had in view, this volume is a faithful representation of the late Poets of England. Not of the greatest, as Tennyson and the Brownings, whose works are in the hands of all, and whose fame is fixed for the present, however it may fluctuate in future ; but of their younger brothers and sisters, to whom fame is not yet assured, although they have already won reputations of greater or lesser worth. Who among their number are likely to rank with the Immortals, Time alone can decide. My business with, my duty to, them, is to present all at their best, giving each the place he seems entitled to, so far as it can be done in a volume of this size. No recent poet, with whose works I am acquainted, has been overlooked, but several not so widely known as they should be are brought to the notice of American readers. The chief of these are the two brothers of the Laureate, Frederick Tennyson and Charles Turner (why the latter has changed his name I have not learned, but doubtless for family

reasons, such as obtain in England,—possibly the inheritance of an estate), Edwin Arnold, a brother of Matthew Arnold, William Morris, George W. Thornbury, George Meredith (better known as a novelist than a poet), Thomas Westwood, and Frederick Locker. Robert Buchanan and Algernon Charles Swinburne are largely quoted from, because they appear to me the most promising, as they are certainly the most prominent, of the later Poets of England. As regards the last, I have departed from the rule which I laid down at the start, and which was rigidly observed until he was reached,—not to make extracts from poems, but to give entire poems: in his case the rule was not practicable—his writings, so far as I know them, consisting of productions of considerable length, viz., the tragedies of *Rosamond* and *The Queen Mother*, and *Atalanta in Calydon*. From the last named I have selected six Choruses, which in a certain sense are complete in themselves, enough so, at least, to be read as separate poems, without doing violence to their sense.

R. H. S.

NEW YORK, November 18, 1865.

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THE
LATE ENGLISH POETS.

Matthew Arnold.

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM.

AN EPISODE.

AND the first gray of morning filled the east,
And the fog rose out of the Oxus stream.
But all the Tartar camp along the stream
Was hushed, and still the men were plunged in sleep :
Sohrab alone, he slept not : all night long
He had lain wakeful, tossing on his bed ;
But when the gray dawn stole into his tent,
He rose, and clad himself, and girt his sword,
And took his horseman's cloak, and left his tent,
And went abroad into the cold wet fog,
Through the dim camp to Peran-Wisa's tent.

Through the black Tartar tents he passed, which stood
Clustering like bee-hives on the low flat strand
Of Oxus, where the summer floods o'erflow
When the sun melts the snows in high Pamere :
Through the black tents he passed, o'er that low strand,
And to a hillock came, a little back
From the stream's brink, the spot where first a boat,

Crossing the stream in summer, scrapes the land.
The men of former times had crowned the top
With a clay fort: but that was fallen; and now
The Tartars built there Peran-Wisa's tent,
A dome of laths, and o'er it felts were spread.
And Sohrab came there, and went in, and stood
Upon the thick-piled carpets in the tent,
And found the old man sleeping on his bed
Of rugs and felts, and near him lay his arms.
And Peran-Wisa heard him, though the step
Was dulled; for he slept light, an old man's sleep;
And he rose quickly on one arm, and said:—

“Who art thou? for it is not yet clear dawn.
Speak! is there news, or any night alarm?”

But Sohrab came to the bed-side, and said:—
“Thou know'st me, Peran-Wisa: it is I.
The sun is not yet risen, and the foe
Sleep; but I sleep not; all night long I lie
Tossing and wakeful, and I come to thee.
For so did King Afrasiab bid me seek
Thy counsel, and to heed thee as thy son,
In Samarcand, before the army marched;
And I will tell thee what my heart desires.
Thou knowest if, since from Ader-baijan first
I came among the Tartars, and bore arms,
I have still served Afrasiab well, and shown,
At my boy's years, the courage of a man.
This too thou know'st, that, while I still bear on
The conquering Tartar ensigns through the world,
And beat the Persians back on every field,
I seek one man, one man, and one alone—
RUSTUM, my father—who, I hoped, should greet,

Should one day greet, upon some well-fought field,
His not unworthy, not inglorious son.
So I long hoped, but him I never find.
Come then, hear now, and grant me what I ask.
Let the two armies rest to-day: but I
Will challenge forth the bravest Persian lords
To meet me, man to man: if I prevail,
Rustum will surely hear it; if I fall—
Old man, the dead need no one, claim no kin.
Dim is the rumour of a common fight,
Where host meets host, and many names are sunk:
But of a single combat Fame speaks clear."

He spoke: and Peran-Wisa took the hand
Of the young man in his, and sighed, and said:—
"O Sohrab, an unquiet heart is thine!
Canst thou not rest among the Tartar chiefs,
And share the battle's common chance with us
Who love thee, but must press forever first,
In single fight incurring single risk,
To find a father thou hast never seen?
Or, if indeed this one desire rules all,
To seek out Rustum—seek him not through fight:
Seek him in peace, and carry to his arms,
O Sohrab, carry an unwounded son!
But far hence seek him, for he is not here.
For now it is not as when I was young,
When Rustum was in front of every fray:
But now he keeps apart, and sits at home,
In Seistan, with Zal, his father old.
Whether that his own mighty strength at last
Feels the abhorred approaches of old age,
Or in some quarrel with the Persian King.

There go :—Thou wilt not? Yet my heart forebodes
Danger or death awaits thee on this field.
Fain would I know thee safe and well, though lost
To us: fain therefore send thee hence, in peace
To seek thy father, not seek single fights
In vain :—but who can keep the lion's cub
From ravening? and who govern Rustum's son?
Go: I will grant thee what thy heart desires.”

So said he, and dropped Sohrab's hand, and left
His bed, and the warm rugs whereon he lay,
And o'er his chilly limbs his woollen coat
He passed, and tied his sandals on his feet,
And threw a white cloak round him, and he took
In his right hand a ruler's staff, no sword;
And on his head he placed his sheep-skin cap,
Black, glossy, curled, the fleece of Kara-Kul;
And raised the curtain of his tent, and called
His herald to his side, and went abroad.

The sun, by this, had risen, and cleared the fog
From the broad Oxus and the glittering sands:
And from their tents the Tartar horsemen filed
Into the open plain; so Haman bade—
Haman, who next to Peran-Wisa ruled
The host, and still was in his lusty prime.
From their black tents, long files of horse, they streamed.
As when, some gray November morn, the files,
In marching order spread, of long-necked cranes,
Stream over Casbin, and the southern slopes
Of Elburz, from the Aralian estuaries,
Or some frore Caspian reed-bed, southward bound
For the warm Persian sea-board,—so they streamed.
The Tartars of the Oxus, the King's guard,

First, with black sheep-skin caps and with long spears ;
Large men, large steeds, who from Bokhara come
And Khiva, and ferment the milk of mares.

Next the more temperate Toorkmuns of the south,
The Tukas, and the lances of Salore,
And those from Attruck and the Caspian sands ;
Light men, and on light steeds, who only drink
The acrid milk of camels, and their wells.

And then a swarm of wandering horse, who came
From far, and a more doubtful service owned ;
The Tartars of Ferghana, from the banks
Of the Jaxartes, men with scanty beards
And close-set skull-caps ; and those wilder hordes
Who roam o'er Kipchak and the northern waste,
Kalmuks and unkemped Kuzzaks, tribes who stray
Nearest the Pole, and wandering Kirghizzes,
Who come on shaggy ponies from Pamere.

These all filed out from camp into the plain.
And on the other side the Persians formed :
First a light cloud of horse, Tartars they seemed,
The Ilyats of Khorassan ; and behind,
The royal troops of Persia, horse and foot,
Marshalled battalions bright in burnished steel.
But Peran-Wisa with his herald came
Threading the Tartar squadrons to the front,
And with his staff kept back the foremost ranks.
And when Ferood, who led the Persians, saw
That Peran-Wisa kept the Tartars back,
He took his spear, and to the front he came,
And checked his ranks, and fixed them where they stood.
And the old Tartar came upon the sand
Betwixt the silent hosts, and spake, and said :—

“ Ferood, and ye, Persians and Tartars, hear !
Let there be truce between the hosts to-day.
But choose a champion from the Persian lords
To fight our champion Sohrab, man to man.”

As, in the country, on a morn in June,
When the dew glistens on the pearlèd ears,
A shiver runs through the deep corn for joy—
So, when they heard what Peran-Wisa said,
A thrill through all the Tartar squadrons ran
Of pride and hope for Sohrab, whom they loved.

But as a troop of peddlers, from Cabool,
Cross underneath the Indian Caucasus,
That vast sky-neighbouring mountain of milk snow,
Winding so high, that, as they mount, they pass
Long flocks of travelling birds dead on the snow,
Choked by the air, and scarce can they themselves
Slake their parched throats with sugared mulberries—
In single file they move, and stop their breath,
For fear they should dislodge the o’erhanging snows—
So the pale Persians held their breath with fear.

And to Ferood his brother chiefs came up
To counsel : Gudurz and Zoarrah came,
And Feraburz, who ruled the Persian host
Second, and was the uncle of the King ;
These came and counselled ; and then Gudurz said :—

“ Ferood, shame bids us take their challenge up,
Yet champion have we none to match this youth
He has the wild stag’s foot, the lion’s heart !
But Rustum came last night ; aloof he sits
And sullen, and has pitched his tents apart :
Him will I seek, and carry to his ear
The Tartar challenge, and this young man’s name.

Haply he will forget his wrath, and fight.
Stand forth the while, and take their challenge up."

So spake he ; and Ferood stood forth and said :—
" Old man, be it agreed as thou hast said.
Let Sohrab arm, and we will find a man."

He spoke ; and Peran-Wisa turned, and strode
Back through the opening squadrons to his tent.
But through the anxious Persians Gudurz ran,
And crossed the camp which lay behind, and reached,
Out on the sands beyond it, Rustum's tents.
Of scarlet cloth they were, and glittering gay,
Just pitched : the high pavilion in the midst
Was Rustum's, and his men lay camped around.
And Gudurz entered Rustum's tent, and found
Rustum : his morning meal was done, but still
The table stood beside him, charged with food ;
A side of roasted sheep, and cakes of bread,
And dark-green melons ; and there Rustum sate
Listless, and held a falcon on his wrist,
And played with it ; but Gudurz came and stood
Before him ; and he looked and saw him stand ;
And with a cry sprang up, and dropped the bird,
And greeted Gudurz with both hands, and said :—

" Welcome ! these eyes could see no better sight.
What news ? but sit down first, and eat and drink."

But Gudurz stood in the tent door, and said :—
" Not now : a time will come to eat and drink,
But not to-day : to-day has other needs.
The armies are drawn out, and stand at gaze :
For from the Tartars is a challenge brought
To pick a champion from the Persian lords
To fight their champion—and thou know'st his name--

Sohrab men call him, but his birth is hid.
O Rustum, like thy might is this young man's !
He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart.
And he is young, and Iran's chiefs are old,
Or else too weak ; and all eyes turn to thee.
Come down and help us, Rustum, or we lose."

He spoke : but Rustum answered, with a smile :—
" Go to ! if Iran's chiefs are old, then I
Am older ; if the young are weak, the King
Errs strangely : for the King, for Kai Khosroo,
Himself is young, and honors younger men,
And lets the aged moulder to their graves.
Rustum he loves no more, but loves the young—
The young may rise at Sohrab's vaunts, not I.
For what care I, though all speak Sohrab's fame ?
For would that I myself had such a son,
And not that one slight helpless girl I have—
A son so famed, so brave, to send to war,
And I to tarry with the snow-haired Zal,
My father, whom the robber Afghans vex,
And clip his borders short, and drive his herds,
And he has none to guard his weak old age.
There would I go, and hang my armour up,
And with my great name fence that weak old man,
And spend the goodly treasures I have got,
And rest my age, and hear of Sohrab's fame,
And leave to death the hosts of thankless kings,
And with these slaughterous hands draw sword no more.

He spoke, and smiled ; and Gudurz made reply :—
" What then, O Rustum, will men say to this,
When Sohrab dares our bravest forth, and seeks
Thee most of all, and thou, whom most he seeks,

Hidest thy face? Take heed, lest men should say,
Like some old miser, Rustum hoards his fame,
And shuns to peril it with younger men."

And, greatly moved, then Rustum made reply:—
 "O Gudurz, wherefore dost thou say such words?
 Thou knowest better words than this to say.
 What is one more, one less, obscure or famed,
 Valiant or craven, young or old, to me?
 Are not they mortal, am not I myself?
 But who for men of naught would do great deeds?
 Come, thou shalt see how Rustum hoards his fame.
 But I will fight unknown and in plain arms;
 Let not men say of Rustum, he was matched
 In single fight with any mortal man."

He spoke, and frowned; and Gudurz turned, and ran
 Back quickly through the camp in fear and joy—
 Fear at his wrath, but joy that Rustum came.
 But Rustum strode to his tent door, and called
 His followers in, and bade them bring his arms,
 And clad himself in steel: the arms he chose
 Were plain, and on his shield was no device,
 Only his helm was rich, inlaid with gold,
 And from the fluted spine atop a plume
 Of horse-hair waved, a scarlet horse-hair plume.
 So armed, he issued forth; and Ruksh, his horse,
 Followed him, like a faithful hound, at heel—
 Ruksh, whose renown was noised through all the earth,
 The horse whom Rustum on a foray once
 Did in Bokhara by the river find,
 A colt beneath its dam, and drove him home,
 And reared him; a bright bay, with lofty crest;
 Dight with a saddle-cloth of broidered green

Crusted with gold, and on the ground were worked
All beasts of chase, all beasts which hunters know :
So followed, Rustum left his tents, and crossed
The camp, and to the Persian host appeared.
And all the Persians knew him, and with shouts
Hailed ; but the Tartars knew not who he was.
And dear as the wet diver to the eyes
Of his pale wife who waits and weeps on shore,
By sandy Bahrein, in the Persian Gulf,
Plunging all day in the blue waves, at night,
Having made up his tale of precious pearls,
Rejoins her in their hut upon the sands—
So dear to the pale Persians Rustum came.

And Rustum to the Persian front advanced,
And Sohrab armed in Haman's tent, and came.
And as afield the reapers cut a swathe
Down through the middle of a rich man's corn,
And on each side are squares of standing corn,
And in the midst a stubble, short and bare ;
So on each side were squares of men, with spears
Bristling, and in the midst the open sand.
And Rustum came upon the sand, and cast
His eyes towards the Tartar tents, and saw
Sohrab come forth, and eyed him as he came.

As some rich woman, on a winter's morn,
Eyes through her silken curtains the poor drudge
Who with numb, blackened fingers makes her fire—
At cock-crow, on a starlit winter's morn,
When the frost flowers the whitened window-panes—
And wonders how she lives, and what the thoughts
Of that poor drudge may be ; so Rustum eyed
The unknown, adventurous Youth, who from afar

Came seeking Rustum, and defying forth
All the most valiant chiefs. Long he perused
His spirited air, and wondered who he was.
For very young he seemed, tenderly reared;
Like some young cypress, tall, and dark, and straight,
Which in a queen's secluded garden throws
Its slight, dark shadow on the moonlit turf,
By midnight, to a bubbling fountain's sound—
So slender Sohrab seemed, so softly reared.
And a deep pity entered Rustum's soul
As he beheld him coming; and he stood,
And beckoned to him with his hand, and said:—

“ O thou young man, the air of heaven is soft,
And warm, and pleasant; but the grave is cold.
Heaven's air is better than the cold, dead grave.
Behold me! I am vast, and clad in iron,
And tried; and I have stood on many a field
Of blood, and I have fought with many a foe:
Never was that field lost, or that foe saved.
O Sohrab, wherefore wilt thou rush on death?
Be governed: quit the Tartar host, and come
To Iran, and be as my son to me,
And fight beneath my banner till I die.
There are no youths in Iran brave as thou.”

So he spake, mildly: Sohrab heard his voice,
The mighty voice of Rustum; and he saw
His giant figure planted on the sand,
Sole, like some single tower, which a chief
Has builded on the waste in former years
Against the robbers; and he saw that head,
Streaked with its first gray hairs: hope filled his soul;
And he ran forward and embraced his knees,

And clasped his hand within his own, and said :—

“ Oh, by thy father’s head ! by thine own soul !
Art thou not Rustum ? Speak ! art thou not he ?”

But Rustum eyed askance the kneeling youth,
And turned away, and spoke to his own soul :—

“ Ah me, I muse what this young fox may mean.
False, wily, boastful, are these Tartar boys.

For if I now confess this thing he asks,
And hide it not, but say, ‘ Rustum is here’—

He will not yield indeed, nor quit our foes,
But he will find some pretext not to fight,

And praise my fame, and proffer courteous gifts,
A belt or sword perhaps, and go his way.

And on a feast-day, in Afrasiab’s hall

In Samarcand, he will arise and cry—

‘ I challenged once, when the two armies camped
Beside the Oxus, all the Persian lords

To cope with me in single fight ; but they
Shrank ; only Rustum dared : then he and I
Changed gifts, and went on equal terms away.’

So will he speak, perhaps, while men applaud.

Then were the chiefs of Iran shamed through me.’

And then he turned, and sternly spake aloud :—

“ Rise ! wherefore dost thou vainly question thus
Of Rustum ? I am here, whom thou hast called
By challenge forth : make good thy vaunt, or yield
Is it with Rustum only thou wouldest fight ?

Rash boy, men look on Rustum’s face and flee !

For well I know, that did great Rustum stand
Before thy face this day, and were revealed,

There would be then no talk of fighting more.

But being what I am, I tell thee this :

Do thou record it in thine inmost soul :
Either thou shalt renounce thy vaunt, and yield,
Or else thy bones shall strew this sand, till winds
Bleach them, or Oxus with his summer floods,
Oxus in summer wash them all away.”

He spoke : and Sohrab answered, on his feet :—
“ Art thou so fierce ? Thou wilt not fright me so.
I am no girl, to be made pale by words.
Yet this thou hast said well, did Rustum stand
Here on this field, there were no fighting then.
But Rustum is far hence, and we stand here.
Begin : thou art more vast, more dread than I,
And thou art proved, I know, and I am young—
But yet success sways with the breath of Heaven.
And though thou thinkest that thou knowest sure
Thy victory, yet thou canst not surely know ;
For we are all, like swimmers in the sea,
Poised on the top of a huge wave of Fate,
Which hangs uncertain to which side to fall,
And whether it will heave us up to land,
Or whether it will roll us out to sea,
Back out to sea, to the deep waves of death,
We know not, and no search will make us know :
Only the event will teach us in its hour.”

He spoke ; and Rustum answered not, but hurled
His spear. Down from the shoulder, down it came,
As on some partridge in the corn a hawk
That long has towered in the airy clouds
Drops like a plummet : Sohrab saw it come,
And sprang aside, quick as a flash : the spear
Hissed, and went quivering down into the sand,
Which it sent flying wide. Then Sohrab threw

in turn, and full struck Rustum's shield : sharp rang,
The iron plates rang sharp, but turned the spear.
And Rustum seized his club, which none but he
Could wield : an unlopped trunk it was, and huge,
Still rough ; like those which men in treeless plains
To build them boats fish from the flooded rivers,
Hyphasis or Hydaspes, when, high up
By their dark springs, the wind in winter-time
Has made in Himalayan forests wrack,
And strewn the channels with torn boughs ; so huge
The club which Rustum lifted now, and struck
One stroke. But again Sohrab sprang aside,
Lithe as the glancing snake, and the club came
Thundering to earth, and leaped from Rustum's hand.
And Rustum followed his own blow, and fell
To his knees, and with his fingers clutched the sand.
And now might Sohrab have unsheathed his sword,
And pierced the mighty Rustum while he lay
Dizzy, and on his knees, and choked with sand ;
But he looked on, and smiled, nor bared his sword,
But courteously drew back, and spoke, and said :—

“ Thou strik'st too hard : that club of thine will float
Upon the summer floods, and not my bones.
But rise, and be not wroth ; not wroth am I ;
No, when I see thee, wrath forsakes my soul.
Thou sayst, thou art not Rustum : be it so.
Who art thou, then, that canst so touch my soul ?
Boy as I am, I have seen battles too ;
Have waded foremost in their bloody waves,
And heard their hollow roar of dying men ;
But never was my heart thus touched before.
Are they from Heaven, these softenings of the heart ?

O thou old warrior, let us yield to Heaven !
Come, plant we here in earth our angry spears,
And make a truce, and sit upon this sand,
And pledge each other in red wine, like friends,
And thou shalt talk to me of Rustum's deeds.
There are enough foes in the Persian host
Whom I may meet, and strike, and feel no pang ;
Champions enough Afrasiab has, whom thou
Mayst fight ; fight them, when they confront thy spear.
But oh, let there be peace 'twixt thee and me !”

He ceased : but while he spake, Rustum had risen,
And stood erect, trembling with rage : his club
He left to lie, but had regained his spear,
Whose fiery point now in his mailed right hand
Blazed bright and baleful, like that autumn star,
The baleful sign of fevers : dust had soiled
His stately crest, and dimmed his glittering arms.
His breast heaved ; his lips foamed ; and twice his voice
Was choked with rage : at last these words broke way :

“ Girl ! nimble with thy feet, not with thy hands !
Curled minion, dancer, coiner of sweet words !
Fight ; let me hear thy hateful voice no more !
Thou art not in Afrasiab's gardens now
With Tartar girls, with whom thou art wont to dance ;
But on the Oxus sands, and in the dance
Of battle, and with me, who make no play
Of war : I fight it out, and hand to hand.
Speak not to me of truce, and pledge, and wine !
Remember all thy valour : try thy feints
And cunning. All the pity I had is gone,
Because thou hast shamed me before both the hosts
With thy light skipping tricks, and thy girl's wiles.”

He spoke ; and Sohrab kindled at his taunts,
And he too drew his sword : at once they rushed
Together, as two eagles on one prey
Come rushing down together from the clouds,
One from the east, one from the west : their shields
Dashed with a clang together, and a din
Rose, such as that the sinewy woodcutters
Make often in the forest's heart at morn,
Of hewing axes, crashing trees : such blows
Rustum and Sohrab on each other hailed.

And you would say that sun and stars took part
In that unnatural conflict ; for a cloud
Grew suddenly in heaven, and darked the sun
Over the fighters' heads ; and a wind rose
Under their feet, and moaning swept the plain,
And in a sandy whirlwind wrapped the pair.

In gloom they twain were wrapped, and they alone ;
For both the on-looking hosts on either hand
Stood in broad daylight, and the sky was pure,
And the sun sparkled on the Oxus stream.

But in the gloom they fought, with bloodshot eyes
And laboring breath. First Rustum struck the shield
Which Sohrab held stiff out : the steel-spiked spear
Rent the tough plates, but failed to reach the skin,
And Rustum plucked it back with angry groan.

Then Sohrab with his sword smote Rustum's helm,
Nor clove its steel quite through ; but all the crest
He shore away, and that proud horse-hair plume,
Never till now defiled, sank to the dust ;

And Rustum bowed his head ; but then the gloom
Grew blacker : thunder rumbled in the air,
And lightnings rent the cloud ; and Ruksh, the horse,

Who stood at hand, uttered a dreadful cry ;
No horse's cry was that, most like the roar
Of some pained desert lion, who all day
Has trailed the hunter's javelin in his side,
And comes at night to die upon the sand :—
The two hosts heard that cry, and quaked for fear,
And Oxus curdled as it crossed his stream.
But Sohrab heard, and quailed not, but rushed on,
And struck again ; and again Rustum bowed
His head ; but this time all the blade, like glass,
Sprang in a thousand shivers on the helm,
And in his hand the hilt remained alone.
Then Rustum raised his head : his dreadful eyes
Glared, and he shook on high his menacing spear,
And shouted, “Rustum !” Sohrab heard that shout,
And shrank amazed : back he recoiled one step,
And scanned with blinking eyes the advancing Form ;
And then he stood bewildered ; and he dropped
His covering shield, and the spear pierced his side.
He reeled, and staggering back, sank to the ground.
And then the gloom dispersed, and the wind fell,
And the bright sun broke forth, and melted all
The cloud ; the two armies saw the pair—
Saw Rustum standing, safe upon his feet,
And Sohrab, wounded, on the bloody sand.

Then, with a bitter smile, Rustum began :—
“Sohrab, thou thoughtest in thy mind to kill
A Persian lord this day, and strip his corpse,
And bear thy trophies to Afrasiab's tent.
Or else that the great Rustum would come down
Himself to fight, and that thy wiles would move
His heart to take a gift, and let thee go.

And then that all the Tartar host would praise
Thy courage or thy craft, and spread thy fame,
To glad thy father in his weak old age.
Fool ! thou art slain, and by an unknown man !
Dearer to the red jackals shalt thou be,
Than to thy friends, and to thy father old."

And, with a fearless mien, Sohrab replied :—
“ Unknown thou art ; yet thy fierce vaunt is vain.
Thou dost not slay me, proud and boastful man !
No ! Rustum slays me, and this filial heart.
For were I matched with ten such men as thou,
And I were he who till to-day I was,
They should be lying here, I standing there.
But that belovèd name unnerved my arm—
That name, and something, I confess, in thee,
Which troubles all my heart, and made my shield
Fall ; and thy spear transfix'd an unarmed foe.
And now thou boastest, and insult'st my fate.
But hear thou this, fierce Man, tremble to hear !
The mighty Rustum shall avenge my death !
My father, whom I seek through all the world,
He shall avenge my death, and punish thee !”

As when some hunter in the spring hath found
A breeding eagle sitting on her nest,
Upon the craggy isle of a hill lake,
And pierced her with an arrow as she rose,
And followed her to find her where she fell
Far off ;—anon her mate comes winging back
From hunting, and a great way off descries
His huddling young left sole ; at that, he checks
His pinion, and with short, uneasy sweeps
Circles above his eyry, with loud screams

Chiding his mate back to her nest ; but she
Lies dying, with the arrow in her side,
In some far stony gorge out of his ken,
A heap of fluttering feathers : never more
Shall the lake glass her, flying over it ;
Never the black and dripping precipices
Echo her stormy scream as she sails by :—
As that poor bird flies home, nor knows his loss—
So Rustum knew not his own loss, but stood
Over his dying son, and knew him not.

But with a cold, incredulous voice, he said :—
“ What prate is this of fathers and revenge ?
The mighty Rustum never had a son.”

And, with a failing voice, Sohrab replied :—
“ Ah yes, he had ! and that lost son am I.
Surely the news will one day reach his ear,
Reach Rustum, where he sits and tarries long,
Somewhere, I know not where, but far from here ;
And pierce him like a stab, and make him leap
To arms, and cry for vengeance upon thee.
Fierce Man, bethink thee, for an only son !
What will that grief, what will that vengeance be !
Oh, could I live, till I that grief had seen !
Yet him I pity not so much, but her,
My mother, who in Ader-baijan dwells
With that old King her father, who grows gray
With age, who rules over the valiant Koords.
Her most I pity, who no more will see
Sohrab returning from the Tartar camp,
With spoils and honour, when the war is done.
But a dark rumour will be bruited up,
From tribe to tribe, until it reach her ear ;

And then will that defenceless woman learn
That Sohrab will rejoice her sight no more ;
But that in battle with a nameless foe,
By the far-distant Oxus, he is slain."

He spoke ; and as he ceased he wept aloud,
Thinking of her he left, and his own death.
He spoke ; but Rustum listened, plunged in thought.
Nor did he yet believe it was his son
Who spoke, although he called back names he knew ;
For he had had sure tidings that the babe,
Which was in Ader-baijan born to him,
Had been a puny girl, no boy at all :
So that sad mother sent him word, for fear
Rustum should take the boy, to train in arms ;
And so he deemed that either Sohrab took,
By a false boast, the style of Rustum's son ;
Or that men gave it him, to swell his fame.
So deemed he ; yet he listened, plunged in thought ;
And his soul set to grief, as the vast tide
Of the bright rocking Ocean sets to shore
At the full moon : tears gathered in his eyes ;
For he remembered his own early youth,
And all its bounding rapture ; as, at dawn,
The shepherd from his mountain-lodge descries
A far bright city, smitten by the sun,
Through many rolling clouds ;—so Rustum saw
His youth ; saw Sohrab's mother, in her bloom ;
And that old King, her father, who loved well
His wandering guest, and gave him his fair child
With joy ; and all the pleasant life they led,
They thre, in that long-distant summer-time--
The castle, and the dewy woods, and hunt

And hound, and morn on those delightful hills
 In Ader-baijan. And he saw that Youth,
 Of age and looks to be his own dear son,
 Piteous and lovely, lying on the sand,
 Like some rich hyacinth, which by the scythe
 Of an unskilful gardener has been cut,
 Mowing the garden grass-plots near its bed,
 And lies, a fragrant tower of purple bloom,
 On the mown, dying grass ;—so Sohrab lay,
 Lovely in death, upon the common sand.

And Rustum gazed on him with grief, and said :—

“ O Sohrab, thou indeed art such a son
 Whom Rustum, wert thou his, might well have loved !
 Yet here thou errest, Sohrab, or else men
 Have told thee false ;—thou art not Rustum’s son.
 For Rustum had no son : one child he had—
 But one—a girl : who with her mother now
 Plies some light female task, nor dreams of us—
 Of us she dreams not, nor of wounds, nor war.”

But Sohrab answered him in wrath ; for now
 The anguish of the deep-fixed spear grew fierce,
 And he desirèd to draw forth the steel,
 And let the blood flow free, and so to die ;
 But first he would convince his stubborn foe—
 And, rising sternly on one arm, he said :—

“ Man, who art thou who does deny my words ?
 Truth sits upon the lips of dying men,
 And Falsehood, while I lived, was far from mine.
 I tell thee, pricked upon this arm I bear
 That seal which Rustum to my mother gave,
 That she might prick it on the babe she bore.”

He spoke : and all the blood left Rustum’s cheeks ;

And his knees tottered, and he smote his hand
Against his breast—his heavy, mailed hand,
That the hard iron corslet clanked aloud :
And to his heart he pressed the other hand,
And in a hollow voice he spake, and said :—

“ Sohrab, that were a proof which could not lie.
If thou show this, then art thou Rustum’s son.”

Then, with weak, hasty fingers, Sohrab loosed
His belt, and near the shoulder bared his arm,
And showed a sign in faint vermillion points
Pricked : as a cunning workman, in Pekin,
Pricks with vermillion some clear porcelain vase,
An emperor’s gift—at early morn he paints,
And all day long, and, when night comes, the lamp
Lights up his studious forehead and thin hands :—
So delicately pricked the sign appeared
On Sohrab’s arm, the sign of Rustum’s seal.
It was that Griffin, which of old reared Zal,
Rustum’s great father, whom they left to die,
A helpless babe, among the mountain-rocks.
Him that kind creature found, and reared, and loved—
Then Rustum took it for his glorious sign.
And Sohrab bared that figure on his arm,
And himself scanned it long with mournful eyes,
And then he touched it with his hand, and said :—

“ How say’st thou ? Is that sign the proper sign
Of Rustum’s son, or of some other man’s ?”

He spoke : but Rustum gazed, and gazed, and stood
Speechless ; and then he uttered one sharp cry—
“ *O Boy—thy Father !*”—and his voice choked there.
And then a dark cloud passed before his eyes,
And his head swam, and he sank down to earth.

But Sohrab crawled to where he lay, and cast
His arms about his neck, and kissed his lips,
And with fond, faltering fingers stroked his cheeks,
Trying to call him back to life : and life
Came back to Rustum, and he oped his eyes,
And they stood wide with horror ; and he seized
In both his hands the dust which lay around,
And threw it on his head, and smirched his hair,
His hair, and face, and beard, and glittering arms :
And strong convulsive groanings shook his breast,
And his sobs choked him ; and he clutched his sword,
To draw it, and forever let life out.
But Sohrab saw his thought, and held his hands,
And with a soothing voice he spoke, and said :—

“ Father, forbear : for I but meet to-day
The doom that at my birth was written down
In Heaven, and thou art Heaven’s unconscious hand.
Surely my heart cried out that it was thou,
When first I saw thee ; and thy heart spoke too,
I know it : but Fate trod those promptings down
Under its iron heel ; Fate, Fate engaged
The strife, and hurled me on my father’s spear.
But let us speak no more of this : I find
My father ; let me feel that I have found.
Come, sit beside me on this sand, and take
My head betwixt thy hands, and kiss my cheeks,
And wash them with thy tears, and say, ‘ My Son ! ’
Quick ! quick ! for numbered are my sands of life,
And swift ; for like the lightning to this field
I came, and like the wind I go away—
Sudden and swift, and like a passing wind.
But it was writ in Heaven that this should be.”

So said he : and his voice released the heart
Of Rustum, and his tears broke forth ; he cast
His arms around his son's neck, and wept aloud,
And kissed him. And awe fell on both the hosts
When they saw Rustum's grief: and Ruksh, the horse,
With his head bowing to the ground, and mane
Sweeping the dust, came near, and in mute woe
First to the one then to the other moved
His head, as if inquiring what their grief
Might mean ; and from his dark, compassionate eyes,
The big warm tears rolled down, and caked the sand.
But Rustum chid him with stern voice, and said :—

“Ruksh, now thou grievest; but, O Ruksh, thy feet
Should then have rotted on thy nimble joints,
When first they bore thy Master to this field.”

But Sohrab looked upon the horse and said :—
“ Is this, then, Ruksh ? How often, in past days,
My mother told me of thee, thou brave Steed !
My terrible father's terrible horse ; and said,
That I should one day find thy lord and thee.
Come, let me lay my hand upon thy mane.
O Ruksh, thou art more fortunate than I ;
For thou hast gone where I shall never go,
And snuffed the breezes of my father's home.
And thou hast trod the sands of Seistan,
And seen the River of Helmund, and the Lake
Of Zirrah ; and the aged Zal himself
Has often stroked thy neck, and given thee food,
Corn in a golden platter soaked with wine,
And said—‘ O Ruksh ! bear Rustum well ! ’—but I
Have never known my grandsire's furrowed face,
Nor seen his lofty house in Seistan,

Nor slaked my thirst at the clear Helmund stream :
 But lodged among my father's foes, and seen
 Afrasiab's cities only, Samarcand,
 Bokhara, and lone Khiva in the waste,
 And the black Toorkmun tents ; and only drunk
 The desert rivers, Moorghab and Tejend,
 Kohik, and where the Kalmuks feed their sheep,
 The northern Sir ; and this great Oxus stream—
 The yellow Oxus, by whose brink I die."

And, with a heavy groan, Rustum replied :—
 " Oh that its waves were flowing over me !
 Oh that I saw its grains of yellow silt
 Roll tumbling in the current o'er my head !"

And, with a grave, mild voice, Sohrab replied—
 " Desire not that, my father ; thou must live.
 For some are born to do great deeds, and live,
 As some are born to be obscured, and die.
 Do thou the deeds I died too young to do,
 And reap a second glory in thine age.
 Thou art my father, and thy gain is mine.
 But come : thou seest this great host of men
 Which follow me ; I pray thee, slay not these :
 Let me entreat for them : what have they done ?
 They followed me, my hope, my fame, my star.
 Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.
 But me thou must bear hence, not send with them,
 But carry me with thee to Seistan,
 And place me on a bed, and mourn for me,
 Thou, and the snow-haired Zal, and all thy friends.
 And thou must lay me in that lovely earth,
 And heap a stately mound above my bones,
 And plant a far-seen pillar over all :

That so the passing horseman on the waste
May see my tomb a great way off, and say—
'*Sohrab, the mighty Rustum's son, lies there,
Whom his great father did in ignorance kill'*—
And I be not forgotten in my grave."

And, with a mournful voice, Rustum replied :—
" Fear not ; as thou hast said, Sohrab, my son,
So shall it be : for I will burn my tents,
And quit the host, and bear thee hence with me,
And carry thee away to Seistan,
And place thee on a bed, and mourn for thee,
With the snow-headed Zal, and all my friends.
And I will lay thee in that lovely earth,
And heap a stately mound above thy bones,
And plant a far-seen pillar over all :
And men shall not forget thee in thy grave.
And I will spare thy host : yea, let them go :
Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.
What should I do with slaying any more ?
For would that all whom I have ever slain
Might be once more alive ; my bitterest foes,
And they who were called champions in their time,
And through whose death I won that fame I have ;
And I were nothing but a common man,
A poor, mean soldier, and without renown ;
So thou mightest live too, my Son, my Son !
Or rather would that I, even I myself,
Might now be lying on this bloody sand,
Near death, and by an ignorant stroke of thine,
Not thou of mine ; and I might die, not thou ;
And I, not thou, be borne to Seistan ;
And Zal might weep above my grave, not thine ;

And say—‘*O son, I weep thee not too sore,
For willingly, I know, thou met’st thine end.*’—
But now in blood and battles was my youth,
And full of blood and battles is my age ;
And I shall never end this life of blood.”

Then, at the point of death, Sohrab replied :—
“ A life of blood indeed, thou dreadful Man !
But thou shalt yet have peace ; only not now ;
Not yet : but thou shalt have it on that day,
When thou shalt sail in a high-masted ship,
Thou and the other peers of Kai-Khosroo,
Returning home over the salt blue sea,
From laying thy dear Master in his grave.”

And Rustum gazed on Sohrab’s face, and said :—
“ Soon be that day, my Son, and that deep sea !
Till then, if Fate so wills, let me endure.”

He spoke : and Sohrab smiled on him, and took
The spear, and drew it from his side, and eased
His wound’s imperious anguish : but the blood
Came welling from the open gash, and life
Flowed with the stream : all down his cold white side
The crimson torrent poured, dim now, and soiled,
Like the soiled tissue of white violets
Left, freshly gathered, on their native bank,
By romping children, whom their nurses call
From the hot field at noon : his head drooped low,
His limbs grew slack ; motionless, white, he lay—
White, with eyes closed ; only when heavy gasps,
Deep, heavy gasps, quivering through all his frame,
Convulsed him back to life, he opened them,
And fixed them feebly on his father’s face :
Till now all strength was ebbed, and from his limbs

Unwillingly the spirit fled away,
Regretting the warm mansion which it left,
And youth and bloom, and this delightful world.

So, on the bloody sand, Sohrab lay dead.
And the great Rustum drew his horseman's cloak
Down o'er his face, and sate by his dead son.
As those black granite pillars, once high-reared
By Jemshid in Persepolis, to bear
His house, now, mid their broken flights of steps,
Lie prone, enormous, down the mountain-side—
So in the sand lay Rustum by his son.

And night came down over the solemn waste,
And the two gazing hosts, and that sole pair,
And darkened all ; and a cold fog, with night,
Crept from the Oxus. Soon a hum arose,
As of a great assembly loosed, and fires
Began to twinkle through the fog : for now
Both armies moved to camp, and took their meal
The Persians took it on the open sands
Southward ; the Tartars by the river marge :
And Rustum and his son were left alone.

But the majestic river floated on,
Out of the mist and hum of that low land,
Into the frosty starlight, and there moved,
Rejoicing, through the hushed Chorasmian waste,
Under the solitary moon : he flowed
Right for the Polar Star, past Orgunjè,
Brimming, and bright, and large : then sands begin
To hem his watery march, and dam his streams,
And split his currents ; that for many a league
The shorn and parcelled Oxus strains along
Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles—

Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had
In his high mountain cradle in Pamere,
A foiled circuitous wanderer :—till at last
The longed-for dash of waves is heard, and wide
His luminous home of waters opens, bright
And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bathed stars
Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT.

“IN the court of his uncle King Marc, the king of Cornwall, who at this time resided at the Castle of Tyntagil, Tristram became expert in all knightly exercises. The king of Ireland, at Tristram’s solicitations, promised to bestow his daughter Iseult in marriage on King Marc. The mother of Iseult gave to her daughter’s confidante a philtre, or love-potion, to be administered on the night of her nuptials. Of this beverage Tristram and Iseult, on their voyage to Cornwall, unfortunately partook. Its influence, during the remainder of their lives, regulated the affections and destiny of the lovers. . . .

“After the arrival of Tristram and Iseult in Cornwall, and the nuptials of the latter with King Marc, a great part of the romance is occupied with their contrivances to procure secret interviews.—Tristram, being forced to leave Cornwall on account of the displeasure of his uncle, repaired to Brittany, where lived Iseult with the White Hands.—He married her—more out of gratitude than love.—Afterwards he proceeded to the dominions of Arthur, which became the theatre of unnumbered exploits.

“Tristram, subsequent to these events, returned to Brittany, and to his long-neglected wife. There, being wounded and sick, he was soon reduced to the lowest ebb. In this situation, he dispatched a confidant to the queen of Cornwali, to try if he could induce her to accompany him to Brittany,” &c.—*Dunlop’s History of Fiction*.

I.

TRISTRAM.

TRISTRAM.

IS she not come? 'The messenger was sure.
 Prop me upon the pillows once again—
 Raise me, my Page: this cannot long endure.
 Christ! what a night! how the sleet whips the pane!
 What lights will those out to the northward be?

THE PAGE.

The lanterns of the fishing-boats at sea.

TRISTRAM.

Soft!—Who is that stands by the dying fire?

THE PAGE.

Iseult.

TRISTRAM.

Ah! not the Iseult I desire.

* * * *

What Knight is this, so weak and pale,
 Though the locks are yet brown on his noble head
 Propped on pillows in his bed,
 Gazing seaward for the light
 Of some ship that fights the gale
 On this wild December night?
 Over the sick man's feet is spread
 A dark-green forest dress.
 A gold harp leans against the bed,
 Ruddy in the fire's light.
 I know him by his harp of gold,

Famous in Arthur's court of old :
I know him by his forest dress.

The peerless hunter, harper, knight—
Tristram of Lyoness.

What Lady is this, whose silk attire
Gleams so rich in the light of the fire ?
The ringlets on her shoulders lying
In their flitting lustre vying
With the clasp of burnished gold
Which her heavy robe doth hold.
Her looks are mild, her fingers slight
As the driven snow are white ;
And her cheeks are sunk and pale.

Is it that the bleak sea-gale
Beating from the Atlantic Sea
On this coast of Brittany,
Nips too keenly the sweet Flower ?—

Is it that a deep fatigue
Hath come on her, a chilly fear,
Passing all her youthful hour
Spinning with her maidens here,
Listlessly through the window-bars
Gazing seaward many a league
From her lonely shore-built tower,
While the knights are at the wars ?—

Or, perhaps, has her young heart
Felt already some deeper smart,
Of those that in secret the heart-strings rive,
Leaving her sunk and pale, though fair ?—

Who is this snow-drop by the sea ?
I know her by her mildness rare,

Her snow-white hands, her golden hair ;
I know her by her rich silk dress,
And her fragile loveliness :
The sweetest Christian soul alive,
 Iseult of Brittany.

Iseult of Brittany ?—but where
Is that other Iseult fair,
That proud, first Iseult, Cornwall's queen ?
She, whom Tristram's ship of yore
To Tyntgil from Ireland bore,
To Cornwall's palace, to the side
Of King Marc, to be his bride ?
She who, as they voyaged, quaffed
With Tristram that spiced magic draught,
Which since then forever rolls
Through their blood, and binds their souls,

 Working love, but working teen ?—
There were two Iseults, who did sway
Each her hour of Tristram's day ;
But one possessed his waning time,
The other his resplendent prime.
Behold her here, the patient Flower,
Who possessed his darker hour !
Iseult of the Snow White Hand

 Watches pale by Tristram's bed.—
She is here who had his gloom,
Where art thou who hadst his bloom ?
One such kiss as those of yore
Might thy dying knight restore—

 Does the love-draught work no more ?
Art thou cold, or false, or dead,
 Iseult of Ireland ?

Loud howls the wind, sharp patters the rain,
 And the knight sinks back on his pillows again.
 He is weak with fever and pain,
 And his spirit is not clear:
 Hark! he mutters in his sleep,
 As he wanders far from here,
 Changes place and time of year,
 And his closèd eye doth sweep
 O'er some fair unwintry sea,
 Not this fierce Atlantic deep,
 As he mutters brokenly.—

TRISTRAM.

The calm sea shines, loose hang the vessel's sails—
 Before us are the sweet green fields of Wales,
 And overhead the cloudless sky of May.—
*“Ah, would I were in those green fields at play,
 Not pent on ship-board this delicious day.*
*Tristram, I pray thee, of thy courtesy,
 Reach me my golden cup that stands by thee,
 And pledge me in it first for courtesy.”*

Ha! dost thou start? are thy lips blanched like mine?
 Child, 'tis no water this, 'tis poisoned wine!
 Iseult!

* * * *

· Ah, sweet angels, let him dream!
 Keep his eyelids! let him seem
 Not this fever-wasted wight
 Thinned and paled before his time,
 But the brilliant youthful knight
 In the glory of his prime,
 Sitting in the gilded barge,
 At thy side, thou lovely charge!

Bending gayly o'er thy hand,
Iseult of Ireland !

And she too, that princess fair,
If her bloom be now less rare,
Let her have her youth again—

Let her be as she was then !

Let her have her proud dark eyes,
And her petulant, quick replies ;
Let her sweep her dazzling hand
With its gesture of command,
And shake back her raven hair
With the old imperious air.

As of old, so let her be,
That first Iseult, princess bright,
Chatting with her youthful knight
As he steers her o'er the sea,
Quitting at her father's will
The green isle where she was bred,

And her bower in Ireland,
For the surge-beat Cornish strand,
Where the prince whom she must wed
Keeps his court in Tyntagil,
Fast beside the sounding sea.

And that golden cup her mother
Gave her, that her future lord—
Gave her, that King Marc and she
Might drink it on her marriage-day,
And forever love each other,

Let her, as she sits on board,
Ah, sweet saints, unwittingly,
See it shine, and take it up,
And to Tristram laughing say—

“ Sir Tristram, of thy courtesy
 Pledge me in my golden cup !”
 Let them drink it—let their hands
 Tremble, and their cheeks be flame,
 As they feel the fatal bands
 Of a love they dare not name,
 With a wild, delicious pain,
 Twine about their hearts again.
 Let the early summer be
 Once more round them, and the sea
 Blue, and o'er its mirror kind
 Let the breath of the May wind,
 Wandering through their drooping sails,
 Die on the green fields of Wales.
 Let a dream like this restore
 What his eye must see no more.

TRISTRAM.

Chill blows the wind, the pleasaunce walks are drear.
 Madcap, what jest was this, to meet me here ?
 Were feet like those made for so wild a way ?
 The southern winter-parlour, by my fay,
 Had been the likeliest trysting-place to-day.—
 “ *Tristram!—nay, nay—thou must not take my hand—*
Tristram—sweet love—we are betrayed—out-planned.
Fly—save thyself—save me! I dare not stay.”—
One last kiss first!—“ Tis vain—to horse—away !”

* * * *

Ah, sweet saints, his dream doth move
 Faster surely than it should,
 From the fever in his blood.
 All the spring-time of his love

Is already gone and past,
And instead thereof is seen
Its winter, which endureth still—
The palace-towers of Tyntagil,
The pleasaunce walks, the weeping queen,
The flying leaves, the straining blast,
And that long, wild kiss—their last !
And this rough December night
And his burning fever-pain
Mingle with his hurrying drean.
Till they rule it, till he seem
The pressed fugitive again,
The love-desperate banished knight
With a fire in his brain
Flying o'er the stormy main.

Whither does he wander now ?
Haply in his dreams the wind
Wafts him here, and lets him find
The lovely Orphan Child again
In her castle by the coast,
The youngest, fairest chatelaine,
That this realm of France can boast,

Our Snowdrop by the Atlantic Sea,
[s]eult of Brittany.

And—for through the haggard air,
The stained arms, the matted hair
Of that stranger knight ill-starred,
There gleamed something that recalled
The Tristram who in better days
Was Launcelot's guest at Joyous Gard—
Welcomed here, and here installed,
Tended of his fever here,

Haply he seems again to move
His young guardian's heart with love ;
In his exiled loneliness,
In his stately deep distress,
Without a word, without a tear.—

Ah, 'tis well he should retrace
His tranquil life in this lone place ;
His gentle bearing at the side
Of his timid youthful bride ;
His long rambles by the shore
On winter evenings, when the roar
Of the near waves came, sadly grand,
Through the dark, up the drownèd sand

Or his endless reveries
In the woods, where the gleams play
On the grass under the trees,
Passing the long summer's day
Idle as a mossy stone
In the forest depths alone ;
The chase neglected, and his hound
Couched beside him on the ground.—

Ah, what trouble's on his brow ?
Hither let him wander now,—
Hither, to the quiet hours
Passed among these heaths of ours
By the gray Atlantic Sea—
Hours, if not of ecstasy,
From violent anguish surely free.

TRISTRAM.

All red with blood the whirling river flows,
The wide plain rings, the dazed air throbs with blows.

Upon us are the chivalry of Rome—
 Their spears are down, their steeds are bathed in foam.
 “Up, Tristram, up,” men cry, “thou moonstruck knight!
 What foul fiend rides thee? On into the fight!”

Above the din her voice is in my ears—
 I see her form glide through the crossing spears.—
 Iseult! . . .

* * * *

Ah, he wanders forth again;
 We cannot keep him; now as then
 There's a secret in his breast
 That will never let him rest.

These musing fits in the green wood
 They cloud the brain, they dull the blood.

His sword is sharp—his horse is good—
 Beyond the mountains will he see
 The famous towns of Italy,
 And label with the blessed sign
 The heathen Saxons on the Rhine.
 At Arthur's side he fights once more
 With the Roman Emperor.

There's many a gay knight where he goes
 Will help him to forget his care:
 The march—the leaguer—heaven's blithe air—
 The neighing steeds—the ringing blows;

Sick pining comes not where these are.
 Ah, what boots it, that the jest.
 Lightens every other brow,
 What, that every other breast
 Dances as the trumpets blow,
 If one's own heart beats not light
 On the waves of the tossed fight,

If one's self cannot get free
From the clog of misery?

Thy lovely youthful Wife grows pale
Watching by the salt sea tide
With her children at her side
For the gleam of thy white sail.
Home, Tristram, to thy halls again!
To our lonely sea complain,
To our forests tell thy pain.

TRISTRAM.

All round the forest sweeps off, black in shade,
But it is moonlight in the open glade:
And in the bottom of the glade shine clear
The forest chapel and the fountain near.

I think, I have a fever in my blood:
Come, let me leave the shadow of this wood,
Ride down, and bathe my hot brow in the flood.

Mild shines the cold spring in the moon's clear light.
God! 'tis *her* face plays in the waters bright.—
“Fair love,” she says, “canst thou forget so soon,
At this soft hour, under this sweet moon?”—
Iseult!

* * * *

Ah, poor soul, if this be so,
Only death can balm thy woe.
The solitudes of the green wood
Had no medicine for thy mood.

The rushing battle cleared thy blood
As little as did solitude.

Ah, his eyelids slowly break
Their hot seals, and let him wake.

What new change shall we now see?
A happier? Worse it cannot be.

TRISTRAM.

Is my Page here? Come, turn me to the fire.
Upon the window-panes the moon shines bright;
The wind is down: but she'll not come to-night.
Ah, no—she is asleep in Tyntagil,
Far hence—her dreams are fair—her sleep is still;
Of me she recks not, nor of my desire.

I have had dreams, I have had dreams, my Page,
Would take a score years from a strong man's age;
And with a blood like mine, will leave, I fear,
Scant leisure for a second messenger.

My Princess, art thou there? Sweet, 'tis too late.
To bed, and sleep: my fever is gone by:
To-night my Page shall keep me company.
Where do the children sleep? kiss them for me.
Poor child, thou art almost as pale as I:
This comes of nursing long and watching late.
To bed—good-night!

* * * * *

She left the gleam-lit fireplace,
She came to the bed-side.
She took his hands in hers: her tears
Down on her slender fingers rained.
She raised her eyes upon his face—
Not with a look of wounded pride,
A look as if the heart complained:—
Her look was like a sad embrace;
The gaze of one who can divine
A grief, and sympathize.

Sweet Flower, thy children's eyes
Are not more innocent than thine.
But they sleep in sheltered rest,
Like helpless birds in the warm nest,
On the Castle's southern side ;
Where feebly comes the mournful roar
Of buffeting wind and surging tide
Through many a room and corridor.
Full on their window the moon's ray
Makes their chamber as bright as day ;
It shines upon the blank white walls,
And on the snowy pillow falls,
And on two angel-heads doth play
Turned to each other :—the eyes closed—
The lashes on the cheeks reposed.
Round each sweet brow the cap close-set
Hardly lets peep the golden hair ;
Through the soft-opened lips the air
Scarcely moves the coverlet.
One little wandering arm is thrown
At random on the counterpane,
And often the fingers close in haste
As if their baby owner chased
The butterflies again.
This stir they have and this alone ;
But else they are so still !
Ah, tired madcaps, you lie still :
But were you at the window now
To look forth on the fairy sight
Of your illumined haunts by night ;
To see the park-glades where you play
Far lovelier than they are by day ;

To see the sparkle on the eaves,
 And upon every giant bough
 Of those old oaks, whose wet red leaves
 Are jewelled with bright drops of rain—
 How would your voices run again !
 And far beyond the sparkling trees
 Of the castle park one sees
 The bare heaths spreading, clear as day,
 Moor behind moor, far, far away,
 Into the heart of Brittany.
 And here and there, locked by the land,
 Long inlets of smooth, glittering sea,
 And many a stretch of watery sand
 All shining in the white moon-beams :
 But you see fairer in your dreams.

What voices are these on the clear night air ?
 What lights in the court ? what steps on the stair ?

II.

ISEULT OF IRELAND.

TRISTRAM.

RAISE the light, my Page, that I may see her.—
 Thou art come at last then, haughty Queen !
 Long I've waited, long I've fought my fever :
 Late thou comest, cruel thou hast been.

ISEULT.

Blame me not, poor sufferer, that I tarried :
 I was bound, I could not break the band.
 Chide not with the past, but feel the present :
 I am here—we meet—I hold thy hand.

TRISTRAM.

Thou art come, indeed—thou hast rejoined me ;
 Thou hast dared it : but too late to save.
 Fear not now that men should tax thy honour.
 I am dying : build—(thou mayst)—my grave !

ISEULT.

Tristram, for the love of Heaven, speak kindly !
 What ! I hear these bitter words from thee ?
 Sick with grief I am, and faint with travel—
 Take my hand—dear Tristram, look on me !

TRISTRAM.

I forgot, thou comest from thy voyage.
 Yes, the spray is on thy cloak and hair.
 But thy dark eyes are not dimmed, proud Iseult !
 And thy beauty never was more fair.

ISEULT.

Ah, harsh flatterer ! let alone my beauty.
 I, like thee, have left my youth afar.
 Take my hand, and touch these wasted fingers—
 See my cheek and lips, how white they are !

TRISTRAM.

Thou art paler :—but thy sweet charm, Iseult !
 Would not fade with the dull years away.
 Ah, how fair thou standest in the moonlight !
 I forgive thee, Iseult !—thou wilt stay ?

ISEULT.

Fear me not, I will be always with thee :
 I will watch thee, tend thee, soothe thy pain ;
 Sing thee tales of true long-parted lovers
 Joined at evening of their days again.

TRISTRAM.

No, thou shalt not speak ; I should be finding
Something altered in thy courtly tone.
Sit—sit by me : I will think, we've lived so
In the greenwood, all our lives, alone.

ISEULT.

Altered, Tristram ? Not in courts, believe me,
Love like mine is altered in the breast.
Courtly life is light and cannot reach it :
Ah, it lives, because so deep suppressed.

Royal state with Marc, my deep-wronged husband—
That was bliss to make my sorrows flee !
Silken courtiers whispering honeyed nothings—
Those were friends to make me false to thee !

What ! thou think'st men speak in courtly chambers
Words by which the wretched are consoled ?
What ! thou think'st this aching brow was cooler,
Circled, Tristram, by a band of gold ?

Ah, on which, if both our lots were balanced,
Was indeed the heaviest burden thrown,
Thee, a weeping exile in thy forest—
Me, a smiling queen upon my throne ?

Vain and strange debate, where both have suffered ;
Both have passed a youth constrained and sad ;
Both have brought their anxious day to evening,
And have now short space for being glad.

Joined we are henceforth : nor will thy people,
Nor thy younger Iseult take it ill,

That an ancient rival shares her office,
When she sees her humbled, pale, and still.

I, a faded watcher by thy pillow,
I, a statue on thy chapel floor,
Poured in grief before the Virgin Mother,
Rouse no anger, make no rivals more.

She will cry—"Is this the foe I dreaded ?
This his idol ? this that royal bride ?
Ah, an hour of health would purge his eyesight ;
Stay, pale queen ! forever by my side."

Hush, no words ! that smile, I see, forgives me.
I am now thy nurse—I bid thee sleep ;
Close thine eyes—this flooding moonlight blinds them—
Nay, all's well again : thou must not weep.

TRISTRAM.

I am happy : yet I feel, there's something
Swells my heart, and takes my breath away :
Through a mist I see thee : near !—come nearer !
Bend—bend down—I yet have much to say.

ISEULT.

Heaven ! his head sinks back upon the pillow !—
Tristram ! Tristram ! let thy heart not fail.
Call on God and on the holy angels !
What, love, courage !—Christ ! he is so pale !

TRISTRAM.

Hush ! 'tis vain—I feel my end approaching :
This is what my mother said should be,
When the fierce pains took her in the forest,
The deep draughts of death, in bearing me.

“Son,” she said, “thy name shall be of sorrow !
Tristram art thou called for my death’s sake !”
So she said, and died in the drear forest.
Grief since then his home with me doth make.

I am dying.—Start not, nor look wildly !
Me, thy living friend, thou canst not save !
But, since living we were ununited,
Go not far, O Iseult ! from my grave.

Rise, go hence, and seek the Princess Iseult :
Speak her fair—she is of royal blood.
Say, I charged her, that ye live together :—
She will grant it—she is kind and good.
Now, to sail the seas of Death, I leave thee.
One last kiss upon the living shore !

ISEULT.

Tristram !—Tristram !—stay—receive me with thee !
Iseult leaves thee, Tristram, never more.

* * * *

You see them clear : the moon shines bright.
Slow—slow and softly, where she stood,
She sinks upon the ground : her hood
Had fallen back : her arms outspread
Still hold her lover’s hands : her head
Is bowed, half buried, on the bed.
O’er the blanched sheet her raven hair
Lies in disordered streams ; and there,
Strung like white stars, the pearls still are,
And the golden bracelets heavy and rare
Flash on her white arms still,
The very same which yesternight

Flashed in the silver sconces' light,
When the feast was loud and the laughter shrill
In the banquet-hall of Tyntagil.
But then they decked a restless ghost
With hot, flushed cheeks, and brilliant eyes,
And quivering lips, on which the tide
Of courtly speech abruptly died,
And a glance that over the crowded floor,
The dancers, and the festive host,

Flew ever to the door :

That the knights eyed her in surprise,
And the dames whispered scoffingly—
“ Her moods, good lack, they pass like showers !
But yesternight and she would be
As pale and still as withered flowers ;
And now to-night she laughs and speaks,
And has a colour in her cheeks,

Heaven keep us from such fantasy !”—

The air of the December night
Steals coldly around the chamber bright,
Where those lifeless lovers be.

Swinging with it, in the light

Flaps the ghostlike tapestry.

And on the arras wrought you see

A stately Huntsman, clad in green,

And round him a fresh forest scene.

On that clear forest-knoll he stays

With his pack round him, and delays.

He stares and stares, with troubled face,

At this huge gleam-lit fireplace,

At the bright iron-figured door,

And those blown rushes on the floor.

He gazes down into the room
With heated cheeks and flurried air,
And to himself he seems to say :—
“ *What place is this, and who are they ?*
Who is that kneeling Lady fair ?
And on his pillows that pale Knight
Who seems of marble on a tomb ?
How comes it here, this chamber bright,
Through whose mullioned windows clear
The castle court all wet with rain,
The drawbridge and the moat appear,
And then the beach, and, marked with spray,
The sunken reefs, and far away
The unquiet bright Atlantic plain ?—

What ! has some glamour made me sleep,
And sent me with my dogs to sweep,
By night, with boisterous bugle-peal,
Through some old, sca-side, knightly hall,
Not in the free greenwood at all ?
That Knight’s asleep, and at her prayer
That Lady by the bed doth knel :
Then hush, thou boisterous bugle-peal !”—

The wild boar rustles in his lair—
The fierce hounds snuff the tainted air—
But lord and hounds keep rooted there.

Cheer, cheer thy dogs into the brake,
O Hunter ! and without a fear
Thy golden-tasselled bugle blow,
And through the glades thy pastime take !

For thou wilt rouse no sleepers here :
For these thou seest are unmoved ;
Cold, cold as those who lived and loved
A thousand years ago.

III.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY.

A YEAR had flown, and o'er the sea away,
In Cornwall, Tristram and queen Iseult lay ;
At Tyntagil, in King Marc's chapel old :
There in a ship they bore those lovers cold.
The young surviving Iseult, one bright day,
Had wandered forth : her children were at play
In a green circular hollow in the heath
Which borders the sea-shore ; a country path
Creeps over it from the tilled fields behind.
The hollow's grassy banks are soft inclined,
And to one standing on them, far and near
The lone unbroken view spreads bright and clear
Over the waste :—This cirque of open ground
Is light and green ; the heather, which all round
Creeps thickly, grows not here ; but the pale grass
Is strewn with rocks, and many a shivered mass
Of veined white gleaming quartz, and here and there
Dotted with holly-trees and juniper.
In the smooth centre of the opening stood
Three hollies side by side, and made a screen,
Warm with the winter sun, of burnished green,
With scarlet berries gemmed, the fell-fare's food.
Under the glittering hollies Iseult stands,
Watching her children play : their little hands
Are busy gathering spars of quartz, and streams
Of stagshorn for their hats : anon, with screams
Of mad delight they drop their spoils and bound
Among the holly-clumps and broken ground,

Racing full speed, and startling in their rush
The fell-fares and the speckled missel-thrush
Out of their glossy coverts: but when now
Their cheeks were flushed, and over each hot brow,
Under the feathered hats of the sweet pair,
In blinding masses showered the golden hair—
Then Iseult called them to her, and the three
Clustered under the holly screen, and she
Told them an old-world Breton history.

Warm in their mantles wrapped, the three stood there
Under the hollies, in the clear still air—
Mantles with those rich furs deep glistering
Which Venice ships do from swart Egypt bring.
Long they stayed still—then, pacing at their ease,
Moved up and down under the glossy trees;
But still as they pursued their warm, dry road,
From Iseult's lips the unbroken story flowed,
And still the children listened, their blue eyes
Fixed on their mother's face in wide surprise;
Nor did their looks stray once to the sea-side,
Nor to the brown heaths round them, bright and wide,
Nor to the snow which, though 'twas all away
From the open heath, still by the hedgerows lay,
Nor to the shining sea-fowl that with screams
Bore up from where the bright Atlantic gleams,
Swooping to landward; nor to where, quite clear,
The fell-fares settled on the thickets near.
And they would still have listened, till dark night
Came keen and chill down on the heather bright;
But when the red glow on the sea grew cold,
And the gray turrets of the castle old

Looked sternly through the frosty evening air,—
Then Iseult took by the hand those children fair,
And brought her tale to an end, and found the path,
And led them home over the darkening heath.

And is she happy? Does she see unmoved
The days in which she might have lived and loved,
Slip, without bringing bliss, slowly away,
One after one, to-morrow like to-day?
Joy has not found her yet, nor ever will:—
Is it this thought that makes her mien so still,
Her features so fatigued, her eyes, though sweet,
So sunk, so rarely lifted save to meet
Her children's? She moves slow: her voice alone
Has yet an infantine and silver tone,
But even that comes languidly: in truth,
She seems one dying in a mask of youth.
And now she will go home and softly lay
Her laughing children in their beds, and play
Awhile with them before they sleep; and then
She'll light her silver lamp, which fishermen
Dragging their nets through the rough waves, afar,
Along this iron coast, know like a star,
And take her broidery-frame, and there she'll sit
Hour after hour, her gold curls sweeping it,
Lifting her soft-bent head only to mind
Her children, or to listen to the wind.
And when the clock peals midnight, she will move
Her work away, and let her fingers rove
Across the shaggy brows of Tristram's hound,
Who lies, guarding her feet, along the ground:
Or else she will fall musing, her blue eyes

Fixed, her slight hands clasped on her lap ; then rise,
And at her prie-dieu kneel, until she have told
Her rosary beads of ebony tipped with gold,
Then to her soft sleep : and to-morrow 'll be
To-day's exact repeated effigy.

Yes, it is lonely for her in her hall.
The children, and the gray-haired seneschal,
Her women, and Sir Tristram's aged hound,
Are there the sole companions to be found.
But these she loves : and noisier life than this
She would find ill to bear, weak as she is :
She has her children too, and night and day
Is with them ; and the wide heaths where they play,
The hollies, and the cliff, and the sea-shore,
The sand, the sea-birds, and the distant sails,
These are to her dear as to them : the tales
With which this day the children she beguiled,
She gleaned from Breton grandames, when a child,
In every hut along this sea-coast wild.
She herself loves them still, and, when they are told,
Can forget all to hear them, as of old.

What tale did Iseult to the children say,
Under the hollies, that bright winter's day ?

She told them of the fairy-haunted land
Away the other side of Brittany,
Beyond the heaths, edged by the lonely sea ;
Of the deep forest-glades of Broce-liande,
Through whose green boughs the golden sunshine creeps
Where Merlin by the enchanted thorn-tree sleeps.

For here he came with the fay Vivian,
 One April, when the warm days first began ;
 He was on foot, and that false fay, his friend,
 On her white palfrey : here he met his end,
 In these lone sylvan glades, that April day.
 This tale of Merlin and the lovely fay
 Was the one Iseult chose, and she brought clear
 Before the children's fancy him and her.

Blowing between the stems, the forest air
 Had loosened the brown curls of Vivian's hair,
 Which played on her flushed cheek, and her blue eyes
 Sparkled with mocking glee and exercise.
 Her palfrey's flanks were mired and bathed in sweat,
 For they had travelled far and not stopped yet.
 A brier in that tangled wilderness
 Had scored her white right hand, which she allows
 To rest ungloved on her green riding-dress ;
 The other warded off the drooping boughs.
 But still she chatted on, with her blue eyes
 Fixed full on Merlin's face, her stately prize :
 Her 'aviour had the morning's fresh clear grace,
 The spirit of the woods was in her face ;
 She looked so witching fair, that learnèd wight
 Forgot his craft, and his best wits took flight,
 And he grew fond, and eager to obey
 His mistress, use her empire as she may.

They came to where the brushwood ceased, and day
 Peered 'twixt the stems ; and the ground broke away
 In a sloped sward down to a brawling brook,
 And up as high as where they stood to look

On the brook's farther side was clear ; but then
The underwood and trees began again.
This open glen was studded thick with thorns
Then white with blossom ; and you saw the horns,
Through the green fern, of the shy fallow-deer,
Which come at noon down to the water here.
You saw the bright-eyed squirrels dart along
Under the thorns on the green sward ; and strong
The blackbird whistled from the dingles near,
And the light chipping of the woodpecker
Rang lonely and sharp : the sky was fair,
And a fresh breath of spring stirred everywhere.
Merlin and Vivian stopped on the slope's brow,
To gaze on the green sea of leaf and bough
Which glistening lay all round them, lone and mild,
As if to itself the quiet forest smiled.
Upon the brow-top grew a thorn ; and here
The grass was dry and mossed, and you saw clear
Across the hollow : white anemones
Starred the cool turf, and clumps of primroses
Ran out from the dark underwood behind.
No fairer resting-place a man could find.
"Here let us halt," said Merlin then ; and she
Nodded, and tied her palfrey to a tree.

They sate them down together, and a sleep
Fell upon Merlin, more like death, so deep.
Her finger on her lips, then Vivian rose,
And from her brown-locked head the wimple throws
And takes it in her hand, and waves it over
The blossomed thorn-tree and her sleeping lover.
Nine times she waved the fluttering wimple round,

And made a little plot of magic ground.
And in that daisied circle, as men say,
Is Merlin prisoner till the judgment-day,
But she herself whither she will can rove,
For she was passing weary of his love.

THE NECKAN.

IN summer, on the headlands,
The Baltic Sea along,
Sits Neckan with his harp of gold,
And sings his plaintive song.

Green rolls beneath the headlands,
Green rolls the Baltic Sea ;
And there, below the Neckan's feet,
His wife and children be.

He sings not of the ocean,
Its shells and roses pale.
Of earth, of earth the Neckan sings ;
He hath no other tale.

He sits upon the headlands,
And sings a mournful stave
Of all he saw and felt on earth,
Far from the green sea-wave :

Sings how, a knight, he wandered
By castle, field, and town.—
But earthly knights have harder hearts
Than the Sea-Children own.

Sings of his earthly bridal—
Priest, knights, and ladies gay.
“And who art thou,” the priest began,
“Sir Knight, who wedd’st to-day?”
“I am no knight,” he answered;
“From the sea-waves I come.”—
The knights drew sword, the ladies screamed,
The surpliced priest stood dumb.

He sings how from the chapel
He vanished with his bride,
And bore her down to the sea-halls,
Beneath the salt sea tide.

He sings how she sits weeping
Mid shells that round her lie.
“False Neckan shares my bed,” she weeps;
“No Christian mate have I.”—

He sings how through the billows
He rose to earth again,
And sought a priest to sign the cross,
That Neckan heaven might gain.

He sings how, on an evening,
Beneath the birch-trees cool,
He sate and played his harp of gold,
Beside the river pool.

Beside the pool sate Neckan—
Tears filled his cold blue eye.
On his white mule, across the bridge,
A cassocked priest rode by.

“ Why sitt’st thou there, O Neckan,
 And play’st thy harp of gold ?
 Sooner shall this my staff bear leaves,
 Than thou shalt heaven behold.”—

The cassocked priest rode onward,
 And vanished with his mule ;
 And Neckan in the twilight gray
 Wept by the river-pool.

In summer, on the headlands,
 The Baltic Sea along,
 Sits Neckan with his harp of gold,
 And sings this plaintive song.

THE FORSAKEN MERMAN.

COME, dear children, let us away ;
 Down and away below.

Now my brothers call from the bay ;
 Now the great winds shoreward blow ;
 Now the salt tides seaward flow ;
 Now the wild white horses play,
 Champ and chafe and toss in the spray.

Children dear, let us away.

This way, this way.—

Call her once before you go ;
 Call once yet,
 In a voice that she will know :
 “ Margaret ! Margaret !”

Children's voices should be dear
(Call once more) to a mother's ear
Children's voices, wild with pain.

Surely she will come again.
Call her once and come away—
This way, this way.
“Mother dear, we cannot stay.”
The wild white horses foam and fret.
Margaret ! Margaret !

Come, dear children, come away down—
Call no more :
One last look at the white-walled town,
And the little gray church on the windy shore ;
Then come down.
She will not come, though you call all day
Come away, come away.

Children dear, was it yesterday
We heard the sweet bells over the bay ?
In the caverns where we lay,
Through the surf and through the swell,
The far-off sound of a silver bell ?
Sand-strewn caverns, cool and deep,
Where the winds are all asleep :
Where the spent lights quiver and gleam ;
Where the salt weed sways in the stream ;
Where the sea-beasts, ranged all round,
Feed in the ooze of their pasture-ground ;
Where the sea-snakes coil and twine,
Dry their mail and bask in the brine ;
Where great whales come sailing by,

Sail and sail, with unshut eye,
Round the world forever and aye?

When did music come this way?
Children dear, was it yesterday?
Children dear, was it yesterday
(Call yet once) that she went away?
Once she sate with you and me,
On a red gold throne in the heart of the sea,
And the youngest sate on her knee.

She combed its bright hair, and she tended it well,
When down swung the sound of the far-off bell.

She sighed, she looked up through the clear green sea;
She said: "I must go, for my kinsfolk pray
In the little gray church on the shore to-day.

"Twill be Easter-time in the world—ah me!
And I lose my poor soul, Merman, here with thee."
I said: "Go up, dear heart, through the waves,
Say thy prayer, and come back to the kind sea-caves."

She smiled, she went up through the surf in the bay.
Children dear, was it yesterday?

Children dear, were we long alone?
"The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan.
Long prayers," I said, "in the world they say.
Come," I said, and we rose through the surf in the bay.
We went up the beach, by the sandy down
Where the sea-stocks bloom, to the white-walled town;
Through the narrow paved streets, where all was still,
To the little gray church on the windy hill.
From the church came a murmur of folk at their prayers,
But we stood without in the cold-blowing airs.
We climbed on the graves, on the stones, worn with rains,
And we gazed up the aisle through the small leaded panes,

She sat by the pillar ; we saw her clear :
“ Margaret, hist ! come quick—we are here.
Dear heart,” I said, “ we are long alone ;
The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan.”
But, ah, she gave me never a look,
For her eyes were sealed to the holy book.

“ Loud prays the priest ; shut stands the door.”
Come away, children, call no more.
Come away, come down, call no more.

Down, down, down.

Down to the depths of the sea.

She sits at her wheel in the humming town,
Singing most joyfully.

Hark what she sings : “ O joy, O joy,
For the humming street, and the child with its toy ;
For the priest, and the bell, and the holy well ;
For the wheel where I spun,
And the blessed light of the sun.”

And so she sings her fill,
Singing most joyfully,
Till the shuttle falls from her hand,
And the whizzing wheel stands still.

She steals to the window, and looks at the sand,
And over the sand at the sea ;
And her eyes are set in a stare ;
And anon there breaks a sigh,
And anon there drops a tear
From a sorrow-clouded eye,
And a heart sorrow-laden,
A long, long sigh,

For the cold, strange eyes of a little Mermaiden,
And the gleam of her golden hair.

Come away, away, children.
Come, children, come down ;
The hoarse wind blows colder,
Lights shine in the town.
She will start from her slumber
When gusts shake the door ;
She will hear the winds howling,
Will hear the waves roar.
We shall see, while above us
The waves roar and whirl,
A ceiling of amber,
A pavement of pearl.
Singing, "Here came a mortal,
But faithless was she ;
And alone dwell forever
The kings of the sea."

But, children, at midnight,
When soft the winds blow,
When clear falls the moonlight,
When spring-tides are low ;
When sweet airs come seaward
From heaths starred with broom,
And high rocks throw mildly
On the blanched sands a gloom,—
Up the still, glistening beaches,
Up the creeks we will hie ;
Over banks of bright sea-weed
The ebb-tide leaves dry.
We will gaze, from the sand-hills,
At the white, sleeping town ;
At the church on the hill-side—
And then come back down.

Singing, “ There dwells a loved one
 But cruel is she ;
 She left lonely forever
 The kings of the sea.”

OBERMANN.

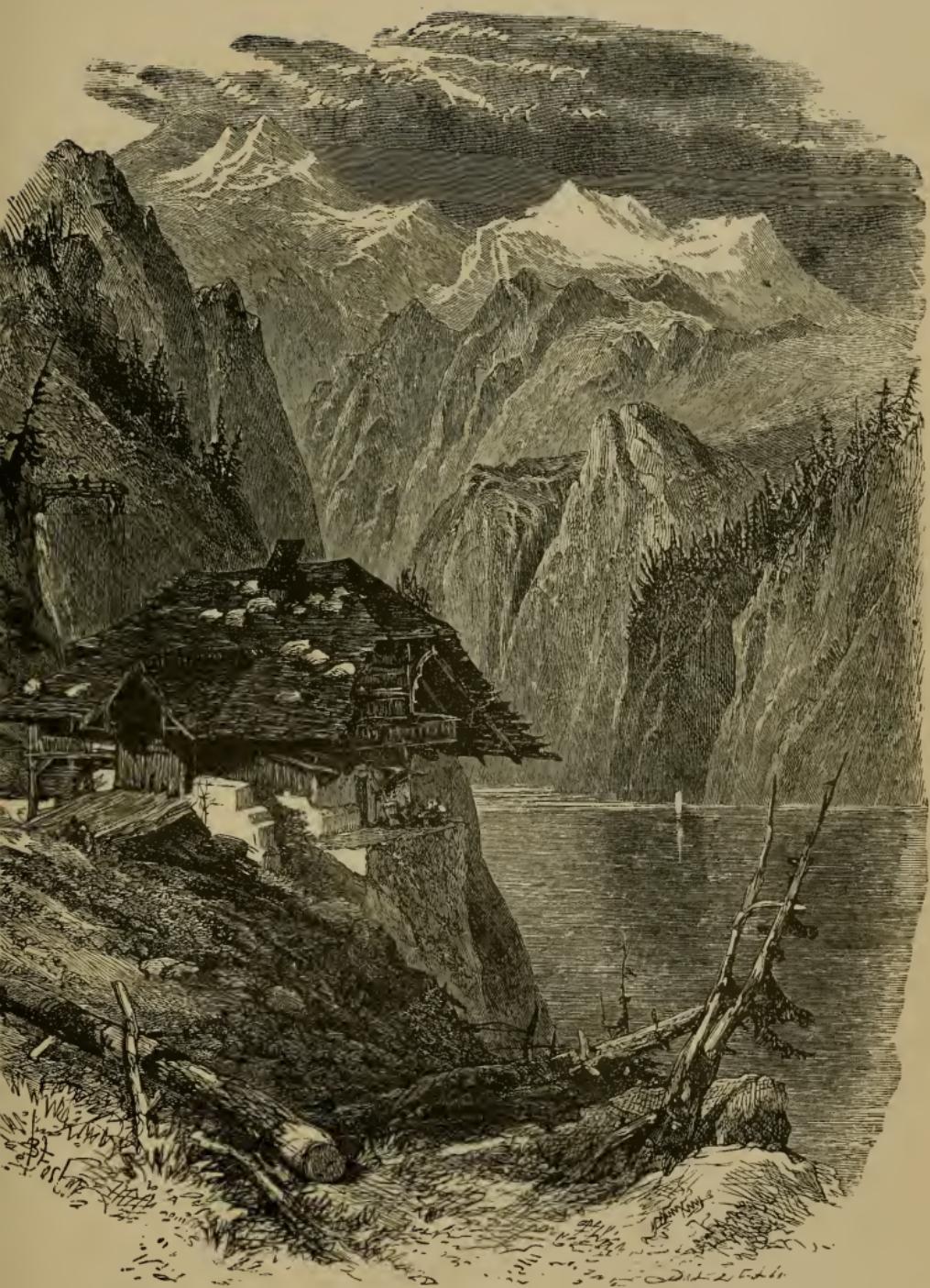
IN front the awful Alpine track
 Crawls up its rocky stair ;
 The autumn storm-winds drive the rack
 Close o'er it, in the air.

Behind are the abandoned baths
 Mute in their meadows lone ;
 The leaves are on the valley paths ;
 The mists are on the Rhone—

The white mists rolling like a sea ;
 I hear the torrents roar.
 —Yes, Obermann, all speaks of thee !
 I feel thee near once more.

I turn thy leaves : I feel their breath
 Once more upon me roll ;
 That air of languor, cold, and death,
 Which brooded o'er thy soul.

Fly hence, poor Wretch, whoe'er thou art,
 Condemned to cast about,
 All shipwreck in thy own weak heart,
 For comfort from without :



OBERMAN.

A fever in these pages burns
Beneath the calm they feign ;
A wounded human spirit turns
Here, on its bed of pain.

Yes, though the virgin mountain air
Fresh through these pages blows,
Though to these leaves the glaciers spare
The soul of their white snows :

Though here a mountain murmur swells
Of many a dark-boughed pine,
Though, as you read, you hear the bells
Of the high-pasturing kine—

Yet, through the hum of torrent lone,
And brooding mountain bee,
There sobs I know not what ground tone
Of human agony.

Is it for this, because the sound
Is fraught too deep with pain,
That, Obermann ! the world around
So little loves thy strain ?

Some secrets may the poet tell,
For the world loves new ways
To tell to deep ones is not well
It knows not what he says.

Yet of the spirits who have reigned
In this our troubled day,
I know but two who have attained,
Save thee, to see their way.

By England's lakes, in gray old age,
His quiet home one keeps ;*
And one, the strong, much-toiling Sage,
In German Weimar sleeps.

But Wordsworth's eyes avert their ken
From half of human fate ;
And Goethe's course few sons of men
May think to emulate.

For he pursued a lonely road,
His eyes on Nature's plan ;
Neither made man too much a God,
Nor God too much a man.

Strong was he, with a spirit free
From mists, and sane, and clear ;
Clearer, how much ! than ours : yet we
Have a worse course to steer.

For though his manhood bore the blast
Of Europe's stormiest time,
Yet in a tranquil world was passed
His tenderer youthful prime.

But we, brought forth and reared in hours
Of change, alarm, surprise—
What shelter to grow ripe in ours ?
What leisure to grow wise ?

Like children bathing on the shore,
Buried a wave beneath,
The second wave succeeds, before
We have had time to breathe.

* Written in November, 1849.

Too fast we live, too much are tried,
 Too harassed, to attain
Wordsworth's sweet calm, or Goethe's wide
 And luminous view to gain.

And then we turn, thou sadder Sage !
 To thee : we feel thy spell ;
The hopeless tangle of our age—
 Thou too hast scanned it well.

Immovable thou sittest ; still
 As death ; composed to bear.
Thy head is clear, thy feeling chill—
 And icy thy despair.

Yes, as the Son of Thetis said,
 One hears thee saying now—
“ *Greater by far than thou are dead :*
 Strive not : die also thou. ”—

Ah ! two desires toss about
 The poet's feverish blood :
One drives him to the world without,
 And one to solitude.

“ *The glow,* ” he cries, “ *the thrill of life—*
 Where, where do these abound ? ”—
Not in the world, not in the strife
 Of men, shall they be found.

He who hath watched, not shared, the strife,
 Knows how the day hath gone ;
He only lives with the world's life
 Who hath renounced his own.

To thee we come, then. Clouds are rolled
Where thou, O Seer, art set;
Thy realm of thought is drear and cold—
The world is colder yet!

And thou hast pleasures too to share
With those who come to thee :
Balms floating on thy mountain air,
And healing sights to see.

How often, where the slopes are green
On Jaman, hast thou sate
By some high chalet door, and seen
The summer day grow late,—

And darkness steal o'er the wet grass
With the pale crocus starred,
And reach that glimmering sheet of glass
Beneath the piny sward,—

Lake Leman's waters, far below :
And watched the rosy light
Fade from the distant peaks of snow :
And on the air of night

Heard accents of the eternal tongue
Through the pine branches play :
Listened, and felt thyself grow young ;
Listened, and wept—Away !

Away the dreams that but deceive !
And thou, sad Guide, adieu !
I go ; Fate drives me : but I leave
Half of my life with you.

We, in some unknown Power's employ,
Move on a rigorous line :
Can neither, when we will, enjoy ;
Nor, when we will, resign.

I in the world must live :—but thou,
Thou melancholy Shade !
Wilt not, if thou canst see me now,
Condemn me, nor upbraid.

For thou art gone away from earth,
And place with those dost claim,
The Children of the Second Birth
Whom the world could not tame ;

And with that small transfigured Band,
Whom many a different way
Conducted to their common land,
Thou learn'st to think as they.

Christian and pagan, king and slave,
Soldier and anchorite,
Distinctions we esteem so grave,
Are nothing in their sight.

They do not ask, who pined unseen.
Who ~~was~~ on action hurled,
Whose one bond is that all have been
Unspotted by the world.

There without anger thou wilt see
Him who obeys thy spell
No more, so he but rest, like thee,
Unsoiled :—and so, farewell !

Farewell!—Whether thou now liest near
That much-loved inland sea,
The ripples of whose blue waves cheer
Vevey and Meillerie,—

And in that gracious region bland,
Where with clear-rustling wave
The scented pines of Switzerland
Stand dark round thy green grave

Between the dusty vineyard walls
Issuing on that green place,
The early peasant still recalls
The pensive stranger's face,

And stoops to clear thy moss-grown dat
Ere he plods on again ;—
Or whether, by maligner Fate,
Among the swarms of men,

Where between granite terraces
The blue Seine rolls her wave,
The Capital of Pleasure sees
Thy hardly-heard-of grave—

Farewell! Under the sky we part,
In this stern Alpine dell :
O unstrung will! O broken heart!
A last, a last farewell!

Edwin Arnold.

THE EGYPTIAN PRINCESS.

Herodotus, Book II., Chap. 132.

THERE was fear and desolation over swarthy Egypt's land,

From the holy city of the sun to hot Syenè's sand ;
The sistrum and the cymbal slept, the merry dance no more

Trampled the evening river-buds by Nile's embroidered shore,

For the daughter of the king must die, the dark magicians said,

Before the red sun sank to rest that day in ocean's bed.

And all that day the temple-smoke loaded the heavy air,
But they prayed to one who heedeth none, nor heareth earnest prayer.

That day the gonfalons were down, the silver lamps untrimmed,

Sad at their oars the rowers sat, silent the Nile-boat skimmed,

And through the land there went a wail of bitterest agony,
From the iron hills of Nubia to the islands of the sea.

There, in the very hall where once her laugh had loudest been,

Where but that morning she had worn the wreath of Beauty's Queen,

She lay, a lost but lovely thing—the wreath was on her brow,

Alas ! the lotus might not match its chilly paleness now ;

And ever as that golden light sank lower in the sky,

Her breath came fainter, and the beam seemed fading in her eye.

Her coal-black hair was tangled, and the sigh of parting day

Stirred tremblingly its silky folds as on her breast they lay ;

How heavily her rounded arm lay buried by her side !

How droopingly her lashes seemed those star-bright eyes to hide !

And once there played upon her lips a smile like summer air,

As though Death came with gentle face, and she mocked her idle fear.

Low o'er the dying maiden's form the king and father bows,

Stern anguish holds the place of pride upon the monarch's brows :—

“ My daughter, in the world thou leav'st so dark without thy smile,

Hast thou one care a father's love—a king's word may beguile—

Hast thou one last light wish—'tis thine—by Isis' throne on high,

If Egypt's blood can win it thee, or Egypt's treasure buy.”

How anxiously he waits her words !—upon the painted wall

In long gold lines the dying lights between the columns

fall ;

It lends her sinking limbs a glow, her pallid cheek a blush,
And on her lifted lashes throws a fitful, lingering flush,
And on her parting lips it plays: oh! how they crowd to
hear

The words that will be iron chains to bind them to her
prayer:—

“ Father, dear father, it is hard to die so very young,
Summer was coming, and I thought to see the flowers
sprung,

Must it be always dark like this?—I cannot see thy face—
I am dying—hold me, father, in thy kind and close em-
brace;

Oh, let them sometimes bear me where the merry sun-
beams lie:

I know thou wilt—farewell, farewell!—’tis easier now to
die!”

Small need of bearded leeches there; not all Arabia’s store
Of precious balm could purchase her one ray of sunlight
more;

Was it strange that tears were glistening where tears should
never be,

When death had smitten down to dust the beautiful and
free?

Was it strange that warriors should raise a woman’s earnest
cry

For help and hope to Heaven’s throne, when such as she
must die?

And ever when the shining sun has brought the summer
round,

And the Nile rises fast and full along the thirsty ground,

They bear her from her silent home to where the gay
sunlight
May linger on the hollow eyes that once were starry
bright,
And strew sweet flowers upon her breast, while gray-haired
matrons tell
Of the high Egyptian maiden-queen that loved the light so
well !

THE SIRENS.

ACROSS the quiet bay
At end of day
With lazy dip of oars a bark is flitting,
Upon the yellow sands,
Waving their hands,
Three women, fairer than of earth, are sitting.

And one with painted water-weeds is weaving garlands rare,
And one is stringing speckled shells to bind her black silk
hair ;
And one with rosy fingers wakes the life o' the silver strings,
And with clear note and throbbing throat enchantingly she
sings.

Wander no more on the wearying wave,
Seek ye no farther a mariner's grave ;
Leave the dull dash of the labouring oar,
Turn from the tempest, and hasten to shore.
Come ! are the planks of the plashy deck
Pillow as soft as a woman's neck ?

Come ! will the roar of the ravenous deep
 Lull *ve* like singing to dreamy sleep :
 Come ! ye shall lie through the spangled night
 Circled in arms of the warmest white :
 Come ! ye shall dance through the sunny day
 Watching the winds and the waters play :
 Come to us ! come ! for we know the best
 Where the bunches of purple are juiciest :
 Come ! ye shall pluck them and press them well,
 Drinking their blood from the white sea-shell.
 Come ! we have kisses and love for each,
 Turn the brass beak to the shelving beach.
 Never was here dull Pain or carking Sorrow,
 But ever bright to-day promises brighter morrow.

“No sorrow here !” they sang, and each in turn took up
 the strain,
 Harping upon that subtle harp the same sweet song again.
 And still with dainty wreathèd arms, and white, inviting
 breast,
 They wooed them to the Golden Isle, the home of happy
 rest.

But there along the deep
 Lay a ghastly heap
 Of white bones, bleaching all the summer long ;
 Relics they were
 Of the marinérè,
 Who heard and passioned at the pleasant song.

So the galley bent her sail
 To the rising gale,
 And over the silver seas her way went winging,

Trusting the noise
 Of the tempest's voice
 Better than that fair land and fatal singing.

FLOWERS.

SWEET sisterhood of flowers,
 Ye tell of happier hours,
 Eloquent eyes, soft hands, and beaming brow:
 Ye were a gift from one
 Best loved beneath the sun,
 And ye must bring me memories of her now.

Thou rare red Picotine !
 Seemed she not like a queen,
 Gloriously proud, nor beautiful the less,
 When what I whispered low
 Made the red blushes show,
 For shame to hear of her own loveliness ?

Thou dost remind me well,
 Down-looking heather-bell,
 How she looked downward in that lonely spot,
 And to my earnest prayer
 Tremblingly gave me there
 This star of lover's hope—"Forget-me-Not."

Sweet Rose ! thy crimson leaves
 Are little happy thieves !
 She kissed thee, and her lips are mine alone :

Now by that blessed day
 I'll wear thy leaves away,
 Kissing the kiss till kissing-place be gone.

Beautiful, bright-winged Pea !
 Ah ! but I envied thee,
 Plucked by her hand, and on her bosom lying.
 Oh ! it were happy death
 There to sigh out the breath ;
 Never to die, and yet be still a-dying

White lily of the vale !
 I fear thou saw'st a tale
 Told without words, when none but thou wert nigh :
 Keep faith, sweet bud of snow !
 None but ourselves must know—
 Thou and the Evening Star, and She, and I.

DEATH AND SLEEP.

THE last good-night of the vesper-bell
 Shook the still leaf with a longer swell ;
 The small bird slept in his woven bed,
 With brown wing shrouding his weary head.
 You looked—and the stars were all away ;
 You looked—and they spangled the silent gray,
 Blossoming out as sudden and soon
 As the last new buds in a night of June ;
 And over the hills was a silver bar
 Where the moon kept watch for the evening star ;
 For never unloved, and never alone,
 The Star-queen comes to her cloudy throne.

'Twas even then when the sky was still,
I saw two shapes on a western hill ;
One was sadly and sweetly fair,
Stoled in the gloss of his sable hair ;
His fingers were filled with a sheaf of spears,
But their blades were dull with his falling tears.
One was a fair and a blooming boy,
His forehead alight with a quiet joy ;
But his lids were low, and his lips locked tight,
And he spake the speech of a dream at night.
One had wings of the raven's plume,
The other was wingèd with silver bloom ;
I knew them then, and I know them now—
The Gods of the dark and the drooping brow ;
Dreams beyond counting, and nights without number,
I had seen the smile of the God of slumber.
The other not yet—but I knew his name,
Before, from his brother, its accent came

SLEEP.

Brother of me ! I have waved my wing !
The world and its sorrows are slumbering :
I have driven the morning and noon away,
And man is free to forget to-day ;
They sleep by the river and on the hill,
Never, before, were their hearts as still ;
For I fastened the fingers of sorrow and pain
With a bond, till the sunlight shall break it again :
And Silence, our beautiful sister, keeps
The door of their dreams till the morning peeps.
Thou, who dost love them better than they
Have the wit to know, or the strength to say,

Wilt thou not sit thee and sharpen to-night
The sting of thy spears, that they strike aright,
And tell me thy tales of the sorrow of life,
And the soul's sweet joy at the ended strife;
How Anguish doth strive for its Angel-prey,
Till the glad life springs from the sinking clay;
And the groan of pain is a cry of bliss
When the spirit hath sight of its happiness?
Why dost thou sorrow, strong brother, now,
With a drooping plume, and a darkened brow?

DEATH.

Silver-winged Sleep! when the dawnings break
Do they sing thee hymns for thy service-sake?
Cometh there ever a blessing or prayer
For thy gentle love and thy tender care?

SLEEP.

Dost thou not know that the Poets keep
Their rarest rhymes for the Soother, Sleep?
Hast thou not heard as thou flittest along
A mother sing to me her cradle-song?
At the sick-girl's pillow they know me well,
And woo me with many a magical spell!
But most thou mayst hear them at break of day
Chorusing sleep, when the gloom is away.
The lover that leaps from the promise of dreams
To a bride and a kiss, that no longer seems;
The worker that wakes from his healthful rest
With a steadier hand and a stronger breast;
The love-stricken lady and sorrowing man,
And the captive that slept while the watches ran,

All sing me praise at the step of morn,
For the pleasant sleep that is over and gone.

DEATH.

Have I not loved them as well as thou,
Though I came with a sterner and sadder brow ?
The spears that I bear in my strong right hand,
Are they not keys to the Better-Land ?
Alas ! if they strike to the sinking heart,
So must the soul and the body part ;
But they open the prison and shatter the chain,
And loosen from life and its lingering pain ;
Yet never to me do the mortals sing
A carol of thanks for my comforting.
When shall the blindness of man have end ?
When shall they know me their lover and friend

SLEEP.

Comfort thee, brother ! they do but sleep,
And the darkness of life doth their senses keep.
Spake I not now, that my praise is said
Most when the midnight is vanished and fled ?
Kind-hearted Brother ! the time shall be
When anthems and hymns shall be all to thee ;
For the morning shall come to the long life-night,
Then shall they know thee and love thee aright.

And I saw them fade into the stars above,
With hands fast locked, as in spirit love.
And I wandered again to the city by,
With a hope to live and a heart to die.

Alexander Smith.

SQUIRE MAURICE.

I THREW from off me yesterday
The dull life I am doomed to wear—
A worn-out garment dim and bare,
And left it in my chambers gray :
The salt breeze wanders in my hair
Beside the splendor of the main :
Ere on the deep three sunsets burn,
To the old chambers I return,
And put it on again.
An old coat, worn for many a year,
No wonder it is something dear !

Ah, year by year life's fire burns out,
And year by year life's stream runs dry :
The wild deer dies within the blood,
The falcon in the eye.
And Hope, who sang miraculous songs
Of what should be, like one inspired,
How she should right the ancient wrongs,
(The generous fool !) grows hoarse and tired ;
And turns from visions of a world renewed,
To dream of tripled rents, fair miles of stream and
wood.

The savage horse, that leads
His tameless herd across the endless plain,
Is taught at last, with sullen heart, to strain
Beneath his load, nor quiver when he bleeds.
We cheat ourselves with our own lying eyes,

We chase a fleeting mirage o'er the sand,
Across a grave the smiling phantom flies,
O'er which we fall with a vain-clutching hand.
What matter if we heave laborious breath,
And crack our hearts and sinews, groan and weep,
The pain of life but sweetens death,
The hardest labour brings the soundest sleep.

On bank and brae how thick they grow,
The self-same clumps, the self-same dyes,
The primroses of long ago—
But ah ! the altered eyes !
I dream they are the very flowers,
Warm with the sun, wet with the showers,
Which, years ago, I used to pull
Returning from the murmuring school.
Sweet Nature is a mother evermore ;
A thousand tribes are breathing on the shore ;
The pansy blows beside the rock,
The globe-flower where the eddy swirls ;
And on this withered human stock
Burst rosy boys and girls.
Sets Nature little store
On that which once she bore ?
Does she forget the old, in rapture bear the new ?
Are ye the flowers that grew
In other seasons ? Do they e'er return,
The men who build the cities on the plain ?—
Or must my tearless eyeballs burn
Forever o'er that early urn,
Ne'er to be cooled by a delicious dew ?
Let me take back my pain

Unto my heart again;
Before I can recover that I lack
The world must be rolled back.

Inland I wander slow,
Mute with the power the earth and heaven wield :
A black spot sails across the golden field,
And through the air a crow.
Before me wavers spring's first butterfly ;
From out the sunny noon there starts the cuckoo's cry ;
The daisied meads are musical with lambs ;
Some play, some feed, some, white as snow-flakes, lie
In the deep sunshine, by their silent dams.
The road grows wide and level to the feet ;
The wandering woodbine through the hedge is drawn,
Unblown its streaky bugles dim and sweet ;
Knee-deep in fern stand startled doe and fawn,
And lo ! there gleams upon a spacious lawn
An Earl's marine retreat.
A little footpath quivers up the height,
And what a vision for a townsman's sight !
A village, peeping from its orchard bloom,
With lowly roofs of thatch, blue threads of smoke,
O'erlooking all, a parsonage of white.
I hear the smithy's hammer, stroke on stroke ;
A steed is at the door ; the rustics talk,
Proud of the notice of the gaitered groom :
A shallow river breaks o'er shallow falls.
Beside the ancient sluice that turns the mill
The lusty miller bawls ;
The parson listens in his garden-walk,
The red-cloaked woman pauses on the hill.

This is a place, you say, exempt from ill,
A paradise, where, all the loitering day,
Enamored pigeons coo upon the roof,
Where children ever play.—
Alas ! Time's webs are rotten, warp and woof ;
Rotten his cloth of gold, his coarsest wear,
Here, black-eyed Richard ruins red-cheeked Moll,
Indifferent as a lord to her despair.
The broken barrow hates the prosperous dray ;
And for a padded pew in which to pray,
The grocer sells his soul.

This cosey hostelry a visit craves ;
Here will I sit awhile,
And watch the heavenly sunshine smile
Upon the village graves.
Strange is this little room in which I wait,
With its old table, rough with rustic names.
'Tis summer now ; instead of blinking flames,
Sweet-smelling ferns are hanging o'er the grate.
With curious eyes I pore
Upon the mantel-piece, its precious wares,
Glazed Scripture prints in black lugubrious frames,
Filled with old Bible lore :
The whale is casting Jonah on the shore ;
Pharaoh is drowning in the curly wave ;
And to Elijah sitting at his cave
The hospitable ravens fly in pairs,
Celestial food within their horny beaks ;
On a slim David, with great pinky cheeks.
A towered Goliath stares.
Here will I sit at peace .

While, piercing through the window's ivy-veil,
A slip of sunshine smites the amber ale ;
And, as the wreaths of fragrant smoke increase,
I'll read the letter which came down to-day.
Ah, happy Maurice ! while in chambers dun
I pore o'er deeds and parchments growing gray,
Each glowing realm that spreads beneath the sun
Is but a paradise where you may play.
I am a bonded workman, you are free ;
In your blood's hey-day—mine is early cold.
Life is rude furze at best ; the sea-breeze wrings
And eats my branches on the bitter lea ;
But you have root in dingle fat and old,
Fat with decayings of a hundred springs,
And blaze all splendid in your points of gold,
And in your heart a linnet sits and sings.

“ Unstable as the wind, infirm as foam,
I envy, Charles, your calmness and your peace ;
The eye that marks its quarry from afar,
The heart that stoops on it and smites it down.
I, struggling in a dim and obscure net,
Am but enmeshed the more. When you were here
My spirit often burned to tell you all ;
I urged the horse up to the leap, it shied
At something in the hedge. This must not last ;
In shame and sorrow, ere I sleep to-night,
I'll shrive my inmost soul.

I have knelt, and sworn
By the sweet heavens—I have madly prayed
'To be by them forsaken, when I forsake
A girl whose lot should be to sleep content

Upon a peasant's breast, and toil all day
'Mong flaxen-headed children. She sits to-night
When all the little town is lost in dream,
Her lax hands sunk in her neglected work,
Thinking of me. Smile not, my man of law,
Who, with a peering candle, walkest through
Black places in men's hearts, which only hear
The foot of conscience at the dead of night !
Her name might slip into my holiest prayer ;
Her breath has come and gone upon my cheek
Yet I dare stand before my mother's face,
Dare look into the heavenly eyes that yearn
Forever through a mist of golden hair,
With no shame on my brow. 'Tis not that w^{av}
My trouble looks. Yet, friend, in simple truth,
Could this thing be obliterated quite,
Expunged forever, like a useless cloak
I'd fling off my possessions, and go forth
My roof the weeping heaven.

Though I would die
Rather than give her pain, I grimly smile
To think, were I assured this horrid dream,
Which poisons day to me, would only prove
A breath upon the mirror of her mind—
A moment dim, then gone (an issue which
Could I have blotted out all memory,
Would let me freely breathe)—this love would turn
To bitterest gall of hate. O Vanity,
Thou god, who on the altar thou hast built
Pilest myrrh and frankincense, appliest the flame,
Then snuff'st the smoky incense, high and calm !
Thou nimble Proteus of all human shapes !

Malvolio, cross-gartered in the sun,
The dying martyr, gazing from his fire
Upon the opened heavens, filled with crowds
Of glorious angel-faces :—thou art all
We smile at, all we hymn ! For thee we blush,
For thee shed noble tears ! The glowing coal,
O'er which the frozen beggar spreads his hands,
Is of one essence with the diamond
That on the haughty forehead of a queen
Trembles with dewy light. Could *I*, through pain,
Give back the peace I stole, my heart would leap ;
Could *she* forget me and regain content—
How deeply I am wronged !

“ Is it the ancient trouble of my house
That makes the hours so terrible ? Other men
Live to more purpose than those monstrous weeds
That drink a breadth of sunshine, and give back
Nor hue nor fragrance ; but my spirit droops,
A dead and idle banner from its staff,
Unstirred by any wind. Within a cell,
Without a straw to play with, or a nail
To carve my sorrow on the gloomy stone,
I sit and watch, from stagnant day to day,
The bloated spider hanging on its thread,
The dull fly on the wall. The blessed sleep
For which none are too poor ; the sleep that comes
So sweetly to the weary labouring man,
The march-worn soldier on the naked ground,
The martyr in the pauses of the rack,
Drives me through forests full of dreadful eyes,
Flings me o'er precipices, makes me kneel,

A sentenced man, before the dark platoon,
Or lays me helpless, in the dim embrace
Of formless horror. Long ago, two foes
Lay in the yellow evening in their gore :
Like a malignant fury, that wild hour
Threw madness in the river of our blood :
Though it has run for thrice a century,
Been sweetened all the way by mothers' tears,
'Tis poisoned until now.

See how I stand
Delaying on the brink, like one who fears
And yet would meet the chill ! When you were here
You saw a smoking-cap among my books ;
A fond and fluttering letter badly spelt,
Each sentence headed with a little *i*,
Came with it, read with a blush, tossed in the fire,
Nor answered yet. Can you not now detect
The snail's slime on the rose ?

This miserable thing
Grew round me like the ivy round the oak ;
Sweet were its early creeping rings, though now
I choke, from knotted root to highest bough.
In those too happy days I could not name
This strange new thing which came upon my youth,
But yielded to its sweetness. Fling it off ?
Trample it down ? Bid me pluck out the eye
In which the sweet world dwells !—One night she wept ;
It seemed so strange that *I* could make her weep :
Kisses may lie, but tears are surely true.
Then unbelief came back in solitude,
And Love grew cruel ; and to be assured
Cried out for tears, and with a shaking hand

And a wild heart that could have almost burst
With utter tenderness, yet would not spare,
He clutched her heart, and at the starting tears
Grew soft with all remorse. For those mad hours
Remembrance frets my heart in solitude,
As the lone mouse when all the house is still
Gnaws at the wainscot.

"Tis a haunting face,
Yet oftentimes I think I love her not ;
Love's white hand flutters o'er my spirit's keys
Unkissed by grateful music. Oft I think
The Lady Florence at the county ball,
Quenching the beauties as the lightning dims
The candles in a room, scarce smiles so sweet.
The one oppresses like a crown of gold,
The other gladdens like a beam in spring,
Stealing across a dim field, making blithe
Its daisies one by one.—I deemed that I
Had broke my house of bondage, when one night
The memory of her face came back so sweet,
And stood between me and the printed page ;
And phantoms of a thousand happy looks
Smiled from the dark. It was the old weak tale
Which time has told from Adam till this hour :
The slave comes back, takes up his broken chain.
I rode through storm toward the little town ;
The minster, gleamed on by the flying moon,
Tolled midnight as I passed. I only sought
To see the line of light beneath her door,
The knowledge of her nearness was so sweet.
Hid in the darkness of the church, I watched
Her window like a shrine : a light came in,

And a soft shadow broke along the roof;
She raised the window and leaned forth awhile.
I could have fallen down and kissed her feet;
The poor dear heart, I knew it could not rest;
I stood between her and the light—my shade
Fell 'cross her silver sphere. The window closed.
When morn with cold bleak crimson laced the east,
Against a stream of raw and rainy wind
I rode back to the Hall.

The play-book tells
How Fortune's slippery wheel in Syracuse
Flung prosperous lordship to the chilly shades,
Heaved serfdom to the sun: in precious silks
Char-women flounced, and scullions sat and laughed
In golden chairs, to see their fellows play
At football with a crown. Within my heart
In this old house, when all the fiends are here,
The story is renewed. Peace only comes
With a wild ride across the barren downs,
One look upon her face. She ne'er complains
Of my long absences, my hasty speech,—
'Crumbs from thy table are enough for me.'
She only asks to be allowed to lean
Her head against my breast a little while,
And she is paid for all. I choke with tears,
And think myself a devil from the pit
Loved by an angel. Oh, that she would change
This tenderness and drooping-lily look,
The flutter when I come, the unblaming voice,
Wet eyes held up to kiss! One flash of fire,
A moment's start of keen and crimson scorn,
Would make me hers forever!

I draw my birth

From a long line of gallant gentlemen,
Who only feared a lie—but what is this?
I dare not slight the daughter of a peer;
Her kindred could avenge. Yet I dare play
And palter with the pure soul of a girl
Without friend, who, smitten, speaks no word,
But with a helpless face sinks in the grave,
And takes her wrongs to God. Thou dark Sir Ralph,
Who lay with broken brand on Marston Moor,
What think you of this son?

“ This prison that I dwell in hath two doors,
Desertion, marriage; both are shut by shame,
And barred by cowardice. A stronger man
Would screw his heart up to the bitter wrench,
And break through either and regain the air.
I cannot give myself or others pain.
I wear a conscience nice and scrupulous,
Which, while it hesitates to draw a tear,
Lets a heart break. Conscience should be clear-eyed,
And look through years: conscience is tenderest oft
When clad in sternness, when it smites to-day,
To stay the ruin which it hears afar
Upon the wind. Pure womanhood is meek—
But which is nobler, the hysterical girl
Weeping o'er flies huddling in slips of sun
On autumn sills, who has not heart enough
To crush a wounded grasshopper and end
Torture at once; or she, with flashing eyes,
Among the cannon, an heroic foot
Upon a fallen breast? My nerveless will

Is like a traitorous second, and deserts
My purpose in the very gap of need.
I groan beneath this cowardice of heart,
Which rolls the evil to be borne to-day
Upon to-morrow, loading it with gloom.
The man who clothes the stony moor with green,
In virtue of the beauty he creates,
Has there a right to dwell. And he who stands
Firm in this shifting sand and drift of things,
And rears from out the wasteful elements
An ordered home, in which the awful Gods,
The lighter Graces, serene Muses, dwell,
Holds in that masterdom the chartered right
To his demesne of Time. But I hold none ;
I live by sufferance, am weak and vain
As a shed leaf upon a turbid stream,
Or an abandoned boat which can but drift
Whither the currents draw—to maelstrom, or
To green delicious shores. I should have had
My pendent cradle rocked by laughing winds
Within some innocent and idle isle,
Where the sweet bread-fruit ripens and falls down,
Where the swollen pumpkin lolls upon the ground,
The lithe and slippery savage, drenched with oil,
Sleeps in the sun, and life is lazy ease.
But lamentation and complaint are vain :
The skies are stern and serious as doom ;
The avalanche is loosened by a laugh ;
And he who throws the dice of destiny,
Though with a sportive and unthinking hand,
Must bide the issue, be it life or death.
One path is clear before me. It may lead

O'er perilous rock, 'cross sands without a well,
Through deep and difficult chasms ; but therein
The whiteness of the soul is kept, and that,
Not joy nor happiness, is victory.

“ Ah, she is not the creature who I dreamed
Should one day walk beside me dearly loved :
No fair majestic woman, void of fear,
And unabashed from purity of heart ;
No girl with liquid eyes and shadowy hair,
To sing at twilight like a nightingale,
Or fill the silence with her glimmering smiles,
Deeper than speech or song. She has no birth,
No dowry, graces ; no accomplishments,
Save a pure cheek, a fearless, innocent brow,
And a true-beating heart. She is no bank
Of rare exotics which o'ercome the sense
With perfumes—only fresh, uncultured soil,
With a wild-violet grace and sweetness, born
Of Nature's teeming foison. Is this not
Enough to sweeten life ? Could one not live
On brown bread, clearest water ? Is this love
(What idle poets feign in fabling songs)
An unseen god, whose voice is heard but once
In youth's green valleys, ever dead and mute
'Mong manhood's iron hills ? A power that comes
On the instant, whelming, like the light that smote
Saul from his horse ; never a thing that draws
Its exquisite being from the light of smiles,
And low sweet tones, and fond companionship ?
Brothers and sisters grow up by our sides,
Unfelt and silently are knit to us,

And one flesh with our hearts ; would love not grow,
In the communion of long-wedded years,
Sweet as the dawning light, the greening spring ?
Would not an infant be the marriage priest,
To stand between us and unite our hands,
And bid us love and be obeyed ? its life,
A fountain, with a cooling fringe of green
Amid the arid sands, by which we twain
Could dwell in deep content ? My sunshine drew
This odorous blossom from the bough ; why then
With frosty fingers wither it, and seal up
Sun-ripened fruit within its barren rind,
Killing all sweet delights ? I drew it forth .
If there is suffering, let me bear it all.

“ A very little goodness goes for much.
Walk 'mong my peasants,—every urchin's face
Lights at my coming ; girls at cottage-doors
Rise from their work and curtsey as I pass,
And old men bless me with their silent tears !
What have I done for this ? I'm kind, they say,
Give coals in winter, cordials for the sick,
And once a fortnight stroke a curly head
Which hides half-frightened in a russet gown.
'Tis easy for the sun to shine. My alms
Are to my riches like a beam to him.
They love me, these poor hinds, though I have ne'er
Resigned a pleasure, let a whim be crossed,
Pinched for an hour the stomach of desire
For one of them. Good Heaven ! what am I
To be thus servitored ? Am I to range
Like the discourseless creatures of the wood,

Without the common dignity of pain,
Without a pale or limit? To take up love
For its strange sweetness, and, whene'er it tires,
Fling it aside as careless as I brush
A gnat from off my arm, and go my way
Untwinged with keen remorse? All this must end.
Firm land at last begins to peer above
The ebbing waves of hesitation and doubt.
Throughout this deepening spring my purpose grows
To flee with her to those young morning lands—
Australia, where the earth is gold, or where
The prairies roll toward the setting sun.
Not Lady Florence with her coronet,
Flinging white arms around me, murmuring
'Husband' upon my breast—not even that
Could make me happy, if I left a grave
On which the shadow of the village spire
Should rest at eve. The pain, if pain there be,
I'll keep locked up within my secret heart,
And wear what joy I have upon my face;
And she shall live and laugh, and never know.

"Come, Brother, at your earliest, down to me.
To-morrow night I sleep at Ferny-Chase:
There, shadowed by the memory of the dead,
We'll talk of this. My thought, mayhap, will take
A different hue, seen in your purer light,
Free from all stain of passion. Ere you come,
Break that false mirror of your ridicule,
Looking in which, the holiest saint beholds
A grinning Jackanapes, and hates himself.
More men have Laughter driven from the right

Than Terror clad with fire. You have been young,
And know the mystery, that when we love,
We love the thing, not only for itself,
But somewhat also for the love we give.
Think of the genial season of your youth,
When you dwelt here, and come with serious heart."

So, in that bitter quarter sits the wind :
The village fool could tell, unless it shifts,
'Twill bring the rain in fiercest flaws and drifts !
How wise we are, yet blind,
Judging the wood's grain from the outer rind ;
Wrapt in the twilight of this prison dim,
He envies me, I envy him !

The stream of my existence boils and leaps
Through broken rainbows 'mong the purple fells,
And breaks its heart mid rocks, close-jammed, confined,
And plunges in a chasm black and blind,
To range in hollow gulfs and iron hells,
And thence escaping, tamed and broken, creeps
Away in a wild sweat of beads and bells.
Though *his* slides lazy through the milky meads,
And once a week the sleepy slow-tailed barge
Rocks the broad water-lilies on its marge,
A dead face wavers from the oozy weeds.
It is but little matter where we dwell,
In fortune's centre, on her utter verge ;
Whether to death our weary steps we urge,
Or ride with ringing bridle, golden selle.
Life is one pattern wrought in different hues,
And there is naught to choose
Between its sad and gay—'tis but to groan

Upon a rainy common or a throne,
Bleed 'neath the purple or the peasants' serge.

At his call I will go,
Though it is very little love can do ;
In spite of all affection tried and true,
Each man alone must struggle with his woe.
He pities her, for he has done her wrong,
And would repair the evil—noble deed,
To flash and tingle in a minstrel's song,
To move the laughter of our modern breed !
And yet the world is wise ; each curve and round
Of custom's road is no result of chance ;
It curves but to avoid some treacherous ground,
Some quagmire in the wilds of circumstance ;
Nor safely left. The long-drawn caravan
Wavers through heat, then files o'er Mecca's stones ;
Far in the blinding desert lie the bones
Of the proud-hearted solitary man.
He marries her, but ere the year has died,—
'Tis an old tale,—they wander to the grave
With hot revolting hearts, yet lashed and tied
Like galley-slave to slave.
Love should not stoop to Love, like prince to lord :
While o'er their heads proud Cupid claps his wings,
Love should meet Love upon the marriage sward,
And kiss, like crowned kings.
If both are hurt, then let them bear the pain
Upon their separate paths ; 'twill die at last :
The deed of one rash moment may remain
To darken all the future with the past.
And yet I cannot tell,—the beam that kills

The gypsy's fire, kindles the desert flower ;
Where he plucks blessings I may gather ills,
And in his sweetest sweet find sourest sour.
If what of wisdom and experience
My years have brought be either guide or aid,
They shall be his, though to my mournful sense
The lights will steal away from wood and glade ;
The garden will be sad with all its glows,
And I shall hear the glistening laurels talk
Of her, as I pass under in the walk,
And my light step will thrill each conscious rose.

The lark hangs high o'er Ferny-Chase
In slant of sun, in twinkle of rain ;
Though loud and clear, the song I hear
Is half of joy, and half of pain.
I know by heart the dear old place,
The place where Spring and Summer meet—
By heart, like those old ballad rhymes,
O'er which I brood a million times,
And sink from sweet to deeper sweet.
I know the changes of the idle skies,
The idle shapes in which the clouds are blown ,
The dear old place is now before my eyes,
Yea, to the daisy's shadow on the stone.
When through the golden furnace of the heat
The far-off landscape seems to shake and beat,
Within the lake I see old Hodge's cows
Stand in their shadows in a tranquil drowse,
While o'er them hangs a restless steam of flies.
I see the clustered chimneys of the Hall
Stretch o'er the lawn toward the blazing lake ;

And in the dewy even-fall
I hear the mellow thrushes call
From tree to tree, from brake to brake.
Ah ! when I thither go
I know that my joy-emptied eyes shall see
A white Ghost wandering where the lilies blow,
A Sorrow sitting by the trysting-tree.
I kiss this soft curl of her living hair,
'Tis full of light as when she did unbind
Her sudden ringlets, making bright the wind :
'Tis here, but she is—where ?
Why do I, like a child impatient, weep ?
Delight dies like a wreath of frosted breath ;
Though here I toil upon the barren deep,
I see the sunshine yonder lie asleep
Upon the calm and beauteous shores of Death
Ah, Maurice, let thy human heart decide,
The first best pilot through distracting jars.
The lowliest roof of love at least will hide
The desolation of the lonely stars.
Stretched on the painful rack of forty years,
I've learned at last the sad philosophy
Of the unhoping heart, unshrinking eye—
God knows ; my icy wisdom and my sneers
Are frozen tears !

The day wears, and I go.
Farewell, Elijah ! may you heartily dine !
I cannot, David, see your fingers twine
In the long hair of your foe.
Housewife, adieu, Heaven keep your ample form ,
May custom never fail ;

And may your heart, as sound as your own ale,
Be soured by never a storm !

Though I have travelled now for twice an hour,
I have not heard a bird or seen a flower.
This wild road has a little mountain rill
To sing to it, ah ! happier than I.
How desolate the region, and how still
The idle earth looks on the idle sky !
I trace the river by its wandering green ;
The vale contracts to a steep pass of fear,
And through the midnight of the pines I hear
The torrent raging down the long ravine.
At last I've reached the summit high and bare ;
I fling myself on heather dry and brown :
As silent as a picture lies the town,
Its peaceful smokes are curling in the air ;
The bay is one delicious sheet of rose,
And round the far point of the tinted cliffs
I see the long strings of the fishing-skiffs
Come home to roost, like lines of evening crows.
I can be idle only one day more
As the nets drying on the sunny shore ;
Thereafter, chambers, still mid thronged resorts,
Strewn books and littered parchments, naught to see,
Save a char-woman's face, a dingy tree,
A fountain plashing in the empty courts.

But let me hasten down this shepherd's track,
The Night is at my back.

THE NIGHT BEFORE THE WEDDING;
OR, TEN YEARS AFTER.

THE country ways are full of mire,
The boughs toss in the fading light,
The winds blow out the sunset's fire,
And sudden droppeth down the night.
I sit in this familiar room,
Where mud-splashed hunting squires resort ;
My sole companion in the gloom
This slowly dying pint of port.

'Mong all the joys my soul hath known,
'Mong errors over which it grieves,
I sit at this dark hour alone,
Like Autumn mid his withered leaves.
This is a night of wild farewells
To all the past, the good, the fair ;
To-morrow, and my wedding-bells
Will make a music in the air.

Like a wet fisher tempest-tossed,
Who sees throughout the weltering night
Afar on some low-lying coast
The streaming of a rainy light,
I saw this hour,—and now 'tis come ;
The rooms are lit, the feast is set ;
Within the twilight I am dumb,
My heart filled with a vague regret.

I cannot say, in Eastern style,
Where'er she treads the pansy blows ;
Nor call her eyes twin-stars, her smile
A sunbeam, and her mouth a rose.
Nor can I, as your bridegrooms do,
Talk of my raptures. Oh, how sore
The fond romance of twenty-two
Is parodied ere thirty-four !

To-night I shake hands with the past,—
Familiar years, adieu, adieu !
An unknown door is open cast,
An empty future wide and new
Stands waiting. O ye naked rooms,
Void, desolate, without a charm !
Will Love's smile chase your lonely glooms,
And drape your walls, and make them warm ?

The man who knew, while he was young,
Some soft and soul-subduing air,
Melts when again he hears it sung,
Although 'tis only half so fair.
So love I thee, and love is sweet
(My Florence, 'tis the cruel truth !)
Because it can to age repeat
That long-lost passion of my youth.

Oh, often did my spirit melt,
Blurred letters, o'er your artless rhymes !
Fair tress, in which the sunshine dwelt,
I've kissed thee many a million times !
And now 'tis done.—My passionate tears,
Mad pleadings with an iron fate,

And all the sweetness of my years,
Are blackened ashes in the grate.

Then ring in the wind, my wedding chimes ;
Smile, villagers, at every door ;
Old churchyard, stuffed with buried crimes,
Be clad in sunshine o'er and o'er ;
And youthful maidens, white and sweet,
Scatter your blossoms far and wide ;
And with a bridal chorus greet
This happy bridegroom and his bride.

“ This happy bridegroom ! ” there is sin
At bottom of my thankless mood :
What if desert alone could win
For me life’s chiefest grace and good ?
Love gives itself ; and if not given,
No genius, beauty, state, or wit,
No gold of earth, no gem of heaven,
Is rich enough to purchase it.

It may be, Florence, loving thee,
My heart will its old memories keep ;
Like some worn sea-shell from the sea,
Filled with the music of the deep.
And you may watch, on nights of rain,
A shadow on my brow encroach ;
Be startled by my sudden pain,
And tenderness of self-reproach.

It may be that your loving wiles
Will call a sigh from far-off years ;

It may be that your happiest smiles
Will brim my eyes with hopeless tears ;
It may be that my sleeping breath
Will shake, with painful visions wrung ;
And, in the awful trance of death,
A stranger's name be on my tongue.

Ye phantoms, born of bitter blood,
Ye ghosts of passion, lean and worn,
Ye terrors of a lonely mood,
What do you here on a wedding morn ?
For, as the dawning sweet and fast
Through all the heaven spreads and flows,
Within life's discord rude and vast,
Love's subtle music grows and grows.

And lightened is the heavy curse,
And clearer is the weary road ;
The very worm the sea-weeds nurse
Is cared for by the Eternal God.
My love, pale blossom of the snow,
Has pierced earth wet with wintry showers,—
Oh, may it drink the sun, and blow,
And be followed by all the year of flowers !

Black Bayard from the stable bring ;
The rain is o'er, the wind is down,
Round stirring farms the birds will sing,
The dawn stand in the sleeping town,
Within an hour. This is her gate,
Her sodden roses droop in night,
And—emblem of my happy fate—
In one dear window there is light.

The dawn is oozing pale and cold
 Through the damp east for many a mile ;
 When half my tale of life is told
 Grim-featured Time begins to smile.
 Last star of night that lingerest yet
 In that long rift of rainy gray,
 Gather thy wasted splendours, set,
 And die into my wedding-day.

Gerald Massey.

LOVE'S FAIRY RING.

WHILE Titans war with social Jove,
 My own sweet Wife and I,
 We make Elysium in our love,
 And let the world go by !
 O never hearts beat half so light
 With crownèd Queen or King !
 O never world was half so bright
 As is our fairy-ring,
 Dear love !
 Our hallowed fairy-ring.

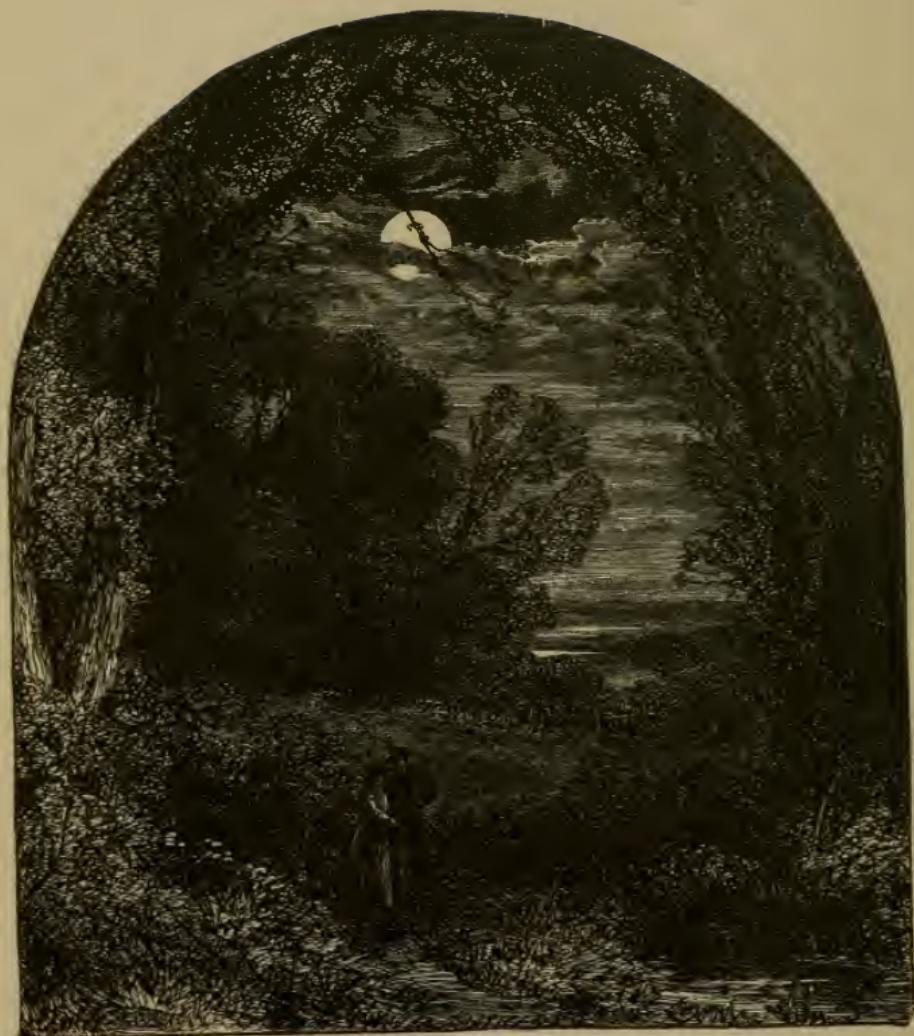
Our world of empire is not large,
 But priceless wealth it holds ;
 A little heaven links marge to marge,
 But what rich realms it folds !
 And clasping all from outer strife
 Sits Love with folden wing,

A-brood o'er dearer life-in-life,
Within our fairy-ring,
Dear love !
Our hallowed fairy-ring.

Thou leanest thy true heart on mine,
And bravely bearest up !
Aye mingling Love's most precious wine
In Life's most bitter cup !
And evermore the circling hours
New gifts of glory bring ;
We live and love like happy flowers,
All in our fairy-ring,
Dear love !
Our hallowed fairy-ring.

We've known a many sorrows, Sweet !
We've wept a many tears,
And often trod with trembling feet
Our pilgrimage of years.
But when our sky grew dark and wild,
All closerier did we cling :
Clouds broke to beauty as you smiled,
Peace crowned our fairy-ring,
Dear love !
Our hallowed fairy-ring.

Away, you Lords of Murderdom ;
Away, O Hate, and Strife !
Hence, revellers, reeling drunken from
Your feast of human life !
Heaven shield our little Goshen round,
From ills that with them spring,



NOW AND THEN.

And never be their footprints found
 Within our fairy-ring,
 Dear love !
 Our hallowed fairy-ring.

But, come ye who the Truth dare own,
 Or work in Love's dear name ;
 Come all who wear the Martyr's crown—
 The Mystic's robe of flame !
 Sweet souls a Christless world doth doom
 Like Birds made blind to sing !
 For such we'll aye make welcome room
 Within our fairy-ring,
 Dear love !
 Our hallowed fairy-ring.

NOW AND THEN.

O LOVE will make the leal heart ache
 That never ached before ;
 And meek or merry eyes 'twill make
 With solemn tears run o'er.
 In tears we parted tenderly,
 My Love and I lang syne ;
 And evermore she vowed to be
 Mine own, aye mine, all mine !

Sing O the tree is blossoming,
 But the worm is at the root ;
 And many a darling flower of Spring
 Will never come to fruit.

We meet now in the streets of life ;
All gone, the old sweet charms ;
At my side leans a loving Wife ;
She—passes Babe-in-arms.

HUNT THE SQUIRREL.

IT was Atle of Vermeland
In winter used to go
A-hunting up in the pine forest,
With snow-shoes, sledge, and bow.

Soon his sledge with the soft fine furs
Was heaped up heavily,
Enough to warm old Winter with,
And a wealthy man was he.

When just as he was going back home,
He looked up into a Tree ;
There sat a merry brown Squirrel that seemed
To say—“ You can’t shoot me.”

And he twinkled all over temptingly,
To the tip of his tail a-curl !
His humour was arch as the look may be
Of a would-be-wooed, sweet Girl

That makes the Lover follow her, follow her,
All his life up-caught
A-floating on with sleeping wings,
High in the heaven of thought.

Atle he left his sledge and furs ;
All day his arrows rung,—
The Squirrel went leaping from bough to bough,—
Only himself they stung.

He hunted far in the dark forest,
Till died the last day-gleams ;
Then wearily laid him down to rest,
And hunted it through his dreams.

All night long the snow fell fast
And covered his snug fur-store ;
Long, long did he strain his eyes,
But never found it more.

Home came Atle of Vermeland,
No Squirrel ! no Furs for the mart !
Empty head brought empty hand ;
Both a very full heart.

Ah, many a one hunts the Squirrel,
In merry or mournful truth ;
Until the gathering snows of age
Cover the treasures of Youth.

Deeper into the forest dark,
The Squirrel will dance all day ;
Till eyes grow blind and miss their mark,
And hearts will lose their way.

My Darling ! should you ever espy
This Squirrel up in the tree,
With a dancing devil in its eye,
Just let the Squirrel be.

LITTLE WILLIE.

POOR little Willie,
With his many pretty wiles ;
Worlds of wisdom in his looks,
And quaint, quiet smiles ;
Hair of amber, touched with
Gold of heaven so brave ;
All lying darkly hid
In a Workhouse Grave.

You remember little Willie ;
Fair and funny fellow ! he
Sprang like a lily
From the dirt of poverty.
Poor little Willie !
Not a friend was nigh,
When, from the cold world,
He crouched down to die.

In the day we wandered foodless,
Little Willie cried for bread ;
In the night we wandered homeless,
Little Willie cried for bed.
Parted at the Workhouse door,
Not a word we said :
Ah, so tired was poor Willie,
And so sweetly sleep the dead.

'Twas in the dead of winter
We laid him in the earth ;
The world brought in the New Year,
On a tide of mirth.

But, for lost little Willie,
Not a tear we crave ;
Cold and Hunger cannot wake him,
In his Workhouse Grave.

WE thought him beautiful,
Felt it hard to part ;
WE loved him dutiful ;
Down, down, poor heart !
The storms they may beat ;
The winter winds may rave ;
Little Willie feels not,
In his Workhouse Grave.

No room for little Willie ;
In the world he had no part ,
On him stared the Gorgon-eye,
Through which looks no heart.
Come to me, said Heaven ;
And, if Heaven will save ,
Little matters though the door
Be a Workhouse Grave.

WHEN CHRISTIE COMES AGAIN.

WHEN the merry spring-tide
Floods all the land ;
Nature hath a Mother's heart,
Gives with open hand ;
Flowers running up the lane
Tell us May is near.

Christie will be coming then !
Christie will be here !
O the merry spring-tide !
We'll be glad in sun or rain,
In the merry, merry days
When Christie comes again.

Pure is her meek nature,
Clear as morning dew,
We can see the Angel
Almost shining through ;
To Earth's sweetest blessing
She the best from Heaven did bring ;
Good Genius of our Love-lamp !
Fine Spirit of the Ring !
O the merry spring-tide !
We'll be glad in sun or rain,
In the merry, merry days
When Christie comes again.

All our joys we'll tell her,
But for her dear sake,
Not a word of Sorrow,
Lest her little heart would ache.
She shall dance and swing and sing,
Do as she likes best ;
Only I must have her hand
In ramble or in rest.
O the merry spring-tide !
We'll be glad in sun or rain,
In the merry, merry days
When Christie comes again.

We'll romp in jewelled meadows,
Hunt in dingles cool with leaves,
Where all night the Nightingale
Melodiously grieves.
In her cheek so tender
The shy and dainty rose
Shall gayly come for kisses,
To every wind that blows.
O the merry spring-tide !
We'll be glad in sun or rain,
In the merry, merry days
When Christie comes again.

Hope will lay so many eggs
In her little nest ;
Don't your heart run over,
Christie, in your breast ?
Thinking how we'll greet you
Safe once more at home,
Ours will run to meet you,
Often ere you come.
O the merry spring-tide !
We'll be glad in sun or rain,
In the merry, merry days
When Christie comes again.

O the joy in our house,
Hearts dancing wild !
Christie will be coming soon,
She's our darling child.
Holy dew of heaven
In each eyelid starts,

Feeling all her dearness,
Darling of all hearts.
O the merry spring-tide !
We'll be glad in sun or rain,
In the merry, merry days
When Christie comes again.

Dreary was our winter ;
Come ! and all the place
Shall breathe a summer sweetness,
And wear a happy face ;
There will be a sun-smile
On stern old Calaby,
Tender as the spring-gold
On our old Oak-Tree !
O the merry spring-tide !
We'll be glad in sun or rain,
In the merry, merry days
When Christie comes again.

Jack, the Dog, will run before,
First to reach the Rail ;
Jack, the Pony, whisk you home,
With long trotting tail !
We have had our struggles, dear,
But couldn't part with Jack ;
We shall all be waiting there,
To welcome Christie back !
O the merry spring-tide !
We'll be glad in sun or rain,
In the merry, merry days
When Christie comes again.

Then blow, you Winds, and shake up
The sleeping flower-beds !
Make the Violets wake up,
The Daisies lift their heads ;
The Lilacs float in fragrance,
Dim-purple, saintly-white !
And bring the bonny bairn to us,
The flower of our delight.
O the merry spring-tide !
We'll be glad in sun or rain,
In the merry, merry days
When Christie comes again.

CHRISTIE'S PORTRAIT.

I.

YOUR tiny picture makes me yearn ;
We are so far apart !
My Darling, I can only turn
And kiss you in my heart.
A thousand tender thoughts a-wing
Swarm in a summer clime,
And hover round it murmuring
Like bees at honey-time.

II.

Upon a little girl I look
Whose pureness makes me sad
I read as in a holy book,
I grow in secret glad !

It seems my darling comes to me
 With something I have lost
 Over life's tossed and troubled sea,
 On some celestial coast.

III.

I think of her when spirit-bowed ;
 A glory fills the place !
 Like sudden light on swords, the proud
 Smile flashes in my face :
 And others see, in passing by,
 But cannot understand
 The vision shining in mine eye,
 My strength of heart and hand.

IV.

That grave content and touching grace,
 Bring tears into mine eyes ;
 She makes my heart a holy place
 Where hymns and incense rise !
 Such calm her gentle spirit brings
 As—smiling overhead—
 White statued saints with peaceful wings
 Shadow the sleeping dead.

V.

Our Christie is no rosy Grace
 With beauty all may see,
 But I have never felt a face
 Grow half so dear to me.
 No curling hair about her brows,
 Like many merry girls ;

Well, straighter to my heart it goes,
And round it curls and curls.

VI.

Meek as the wood anemone glints
To see if heaven be blue,
Is my pale flower with her sweet tints
Of heaven shining through !
She will be poor and never fret,
Sleep sound and lowly lie ;
Will live her quiet life, and let
The great world-storm go by.

VII.

Dear love ! God keep Her in His grasp,
Meek maiden, or brave Wife !
Till His good Angels softly clasp
Her closèd book of life ;
And this fair picture of the Sun,
With birthday blessings given,
Shall fade before a glorious one
Taken of her in heaven.

SIR RICHARD GRENVILLE'S LAST FIGHT

OUR second Richard Lion Heart,
In days of Great Queen Bess,
He did this deed of righteous rage,
And true old nobleness ;
With wrath heroic that was nurst
To bear the fiercest battle-burst,
When willing foes should wreak their worst.

Signalled the English Admiral,
“Weigh or cut anchors.” For
A Spanish fleet bore down, in all
The majesty of war,
Athwart our tack for many a mile,
As there we lay off Florez Isle,
With crews half sick, all tired of toil.

Eleven of our twelve ships escaped ;
Sir Richard stood alone !
Though they were three-and-fifty sail—
A hundred men to one—
The old sea rover would not run,
So long as he had man or gun ;
But he could die when all was done.

“The Devil’s broken loose, my lads,
In shape of Popish Spain ;
And we must sink him in the sea,
Or hound him home again.
Now, you old sea-dogs, show your paws !
Have at them tooth and nail and claws !”
And then his long, bright blade he draws.

The deck was cleared, the boatswain blew ;
The grim sea-lions stand ;
The death-fires lit in every eye,
The burning match in hand.
With mail of glorious intent
All hearts were clad ; and in they went,
A force that cut through where ’twas sent.

“Push home, my hardy pikemen,
For we play a desperate part ;

To-day, my gunners, let them feel
The pulse of England's heart!
They shall remember long that we
Once lived; and think how shamefully
We shook them!—one to fifty-three."

With face of one who cheerly goes
To meet his doom that day,
Sir Richard sprang upon his foes;
The foremost gave him way:
His round shot smashed them through and through,
The great white splinters fiercely flew,
And madder grew his fighting few.

They clasp the little ship Revenge,
As in the arms of fire;
They run aboard her, six at once;
Hearts beat and guns leap higher.
Through bloody gaps the boarders swarm,
But still our English stay the storm,
The bulwark in their breast is firm.

Ship after ship, like broken waves
That wash up on a rock,
Those mighty galleons fall back foiled,
And shattered from the shock.
With fire she answers all their blows;
Again, again in pieces strows
The burning girdle of her foes.

Through all the night the great white storm
Of worlds in silence rolled;
Sirius with his sapphire sparkle,
Mars in ruddy gold.

Heaven looked with stillness terrible
Down on a fight most fierce and fell—
A sea transfigured into hell.

Some know not of their wounds until
 'Tis slippery where they stand ;
Then each one tighter grips his steel,
 As 'twere salvation's hand.
Wild faces glow through lurid night
With sweat of spirit shining bright :
Only the dead on deck turn white.

At daybreak the flame-picture fades,
 In blackness and in blood ;
There, after fifteen hours of fight,
 The unconquered Sea-King stood,
Defying all the power of Spain :
Fifteen Armadas hurled in vain,
And fifteen hundred foemen slain.

Around that little bark Revenge,
 The baffled Spaniards ride
At distance. Two of their good ships
 Were sunken at her side ;
The rest lie round her in a ring,
As round the dying lion-king
The dogs, afraid of his death-spring.

Our pikes all broken, powder spent,
 Sails, masts to shreds were blown ;
And with her dead and wounded crew
 The ship was going down !

Sir Richard's wounds were hot and deep.
Then cried he, with a proud, pale lip,
"Ho, gunner, split and sink the ship!"

"Make ready now, my mariners,
To go aloft with me,
That nothing to the Spaniard
May remain of victory.
They cannot take us, nor we yield;
So let us leave our battle-field,
Under the shelter of God's shield."

They had not heart to dare fulfil
The stern commander's word:
With bloody hands and weeping eyes,
They carried him aboard
The Spaniards' ship; and round him stand
The warriors of his wasted band:
Then said he, feeling death at hand,

"Here die I, Richard Grenville,
With a joyful and quiet mind;
I reach a soldier's end; I leave
A soldier's fame behind,
Who for his queen and country fought,
For honour and religion wrought,
And died as a true soldier ought."

Earth never returned a worthier trust
For hand of Heaven to take,
Since Arthur's sword, Excalibur,
Was cast into the lake,

And the king's grievous wounds were dressed,
And healed, by weeping queens, who blessed,
And bore him to a valley of rest.

Old heroes who could grandly do,
As they could greatly dare ;
A vesture, very glorious,
Their shining spirits wear,
Of noble deeds. God give us grace,
That we may see such face to face,
In our great day that comes apace.

ON A WEDDING DAY.

THUS, hand in hand, and heart in heart,
Face nestling unto face,
Forgotten things like Spirits start
From many a hiding-place !
There is no sound of Babe or Bird,
And all the stillness seems
Sweet as the music only heard
Adown the land of dreams.

And if, because it is so proud,
My heart will find a voice,
And in its dear dream love aloud,
And speak of sweet still joys,
It is no genuine gift of God,
But only goblin gold,
That withers into dead leaves, should
The secret tale be told.

Nine years ago you came to me,
 And nestled on my breast,
 A soft and wingèd mystery
 That settled here to rest ;
 And my heart rocked its Babe of bliss,
 And soothed its child of air,
 With something 'twixt a song and kiss,
 To keep it nestling there.

At first I thought the fairy form
 Too spirit-soft and good
 To fill my poor, low nest with warm
 And wifely womanhood.
 But such a cozy peep of home
 Did your dear eyes unfold ;
 And in their deep and dewy gloom
 What tales of love were told !

In dreamy curves your beauty drooped,
 As tendrils lean to twine,
 And very graciously they stooped
 To bear their fruit, my Vine !
 To bear such blessed fruit of love
 As tenderly increased
 Among the ripe vine-bunches of
 Your balmy-breathing breast.

We cannot boast to have bickered not
 Since you and I were wed ;
 We have not lived the smoothest lot,
 Nor found the downiest bed !
 Time hath not passed o'erhead in stars,
 And underfoot in flowers,

With wings that slept on fragrant airs
Through all the happy hours.

It is our way, more fate than fault,
Love's cloudy fire to clear;
To find some virtue in the salt
That sparkles in a tear!
Pray God it all come right at last,
Pray God it so befall,
That when our day of life is past
The end may crown it all.

Ah, Dear! though lives may pull apart
Down to the roots of love,
One thought will bend us heart to heart
Till lips re-wed above!
One thought the knees of pride will bow
Down to the grave-yard sod;
You are the Mother of Angels now!
We have two babes with God.

Cling closer, closer, for their loss,
About our darlings left,
And let their memories grow like moss
That healeth rent and rift;—
For his dear sake, our Soldier-Boy,
For whom we nightly plead
That he may live for God, and die
For England in her need,—

For her, who like a dancing boat
Leaps o'er life's solemn waves,
Our little Lightheart, who can float
And frolic over graves;

And Grace, who making music goes,
As in some shady place
A Brooklet, prattling to the boughs,
Looks up with its bright face.

Cling closer, closer, life to life,
Cling closer, heart to heart ;
The time will come, my own wed Wife,
When you and I must part !
Let nothing break our band but Death,
For in the worlds above
'Tis the breaker Death that soldereth
Our ring of Wedded Love.

Robert Bulwer Lytton (Owen Meredith)

MADAME LA MARQUISE.

THE folds of her wine-dark violet dress
Glow over the sofa, fall on fall,
As she sits in the air of her loveliness
With a smile for each and for all.

Half of her exquisite face in the shade
Which o'er it the screen in her soft hand flings :
Through the gloom glows her hair in its odorous braid :
In the firelight are sparkling her rings.

As she leans,—the slow smile half shut up in her eyes
Beams the sleepy, long, silk-soft lashes beneath ;
Through her crimson lips, stirred by her faint replies,
Breaks one gleam of her pearl-white teeth.

As she leans,—where your eye, by her beauty subdued,
Droops,—from under warm fringes of broidery white
The slightest of feet, silken-slipped, protrude
For one moment, then slip out of sight.

As I bend o'er her bosom, to tell her the news,
The faint scent of her hair, the approach of her cheek,
The vague warmth of her breath, all my senses suffuse
With HERSELF: and I tremble to speak.

So she sits in the curtained, luxurious light
Of that room, with its porcelain, and pictures, and flowers,
When the dark day's half done, and the snow flutters white,
Past the windows in feathery showers.

All without is so cold,—'neath the low leaden sky !
Down the bald, empty street, like a ghost, the gendarme
Stalks surly: a distant carriage hums by:—
All within is so bright and so warm !

Here we talk of the schemes and the scandals of court.
How the courtesan pushes: the charlatan thrives:
We put horns on the heads of our friends, just for sport:
Put intrigues in the heads of their wives.

Her warm hand, at parting, so strangely thrilled mine,
That at dinner I scarcely remark what they say,—
Drop the ice in my soup, spill the salt in my wine,
Then go yawn at my favourite play.

But she drives after noon:—then's the time to behold her,
With her fair face half hid, like a ripe peeping rose,
'Neath that veil,—o'er the velvets and furs which enfold her,
Leaning back with a queenly repose,—

As she glides up the sunlight! . . . You'd say she was made
To loll back in a carriage, all day, with a smile;
And at dusk, on a sofa, to lean in the shade
Of soft lamps, and be wooed for a while.

Could we find out her heart through that velvet and lace.
Can it beat without ruffling her sumptuous dress?
She will show us her shoulder, her bosom, her face;
But what the heart's like, we must guess.

With live women and men to be found in the world—
(—Live with sorrow and sin,—live with pain and with
passion,—)

Who could live with a doll, though its locks should be curled,
And its petticoats trimmed in the fashion?

'Tis so fair! . . . would my bite, if I bit it, draw blood?
Will it cry if I hurt it? or scold if I kiss?
Is it made, with its beauty, of wax or of wood?
. . . Is it worth while to guess at all this?

AUX ITALIENS.

AT Paris it was, at the Opera there:—
And she looked like a queen in a book that night,
With the wreath of pearl in her raven hair,
And the brooch on her breast, so bright.

Of all the operas that Verdi wrote,
The best, to my taste, is the Trovatore:
And Mario can soothe with a tenor note
The souls in Purgatory.

The moon on the tower slept soft as snow :
And who was not thrilled in the strangest way,
As we heard him sing, while the gas burned low,
“ *Non ti scordar di me?*”

The Emperor there, in his box of state,
Looked grave, as if he had just then seen
The red flag wave from the city-gate,
Where his eagles in bronze had been.

The Empress, too, had a tear in her eye.
You’d have said that her fancy had gone back again,
For one moment, under the old blue sky,
To the old glad life in Spain.

Well ! there in our front-row box we sat,
Together, my bride-betrothed and I :
My gaze was fixed on my opera-hat,
And hers on the stage hard by,

And both were silent, and both were sad.
Like a queen, she leaned on her full white arm,
With that regal, indolent air she had ;
So confident of her charm !

I have not a doubt she was thinking then
Of her former lord, good soul that he was !
Who died the richest, and roundest of men,
The Marquis of Carabas.

I hope that, to get to the kingdom of heaven,
Through a needle’s eye he had not to pass.
I wish him well, for the jointure given
To my lady of Carabas.

Meanwhile, I was thinking of my first love,
As I had not been thinking of aught for years,
Till over my eyes there began to move
Something that felt like tears.

I thought of the dress that she wore last time,
When we stood, 'neath the cypress-trees, together,
In that lost land, in that soft clime,
In the crimson evening weather :

Of that muslin dress (for the eve was hot)
And her warm white neck in its golden chain :
And her full, soft hair, just tied in a knot,
And falling loose again :

And the jasmine-flower in her fair young breast :
(O the faint, sweet smell of that jasmine-flower !)
And the one bird singing alone to his nest :
And the one star over the tower.

I thought of our little quarrels and strife ;
And the letter that brought me back my ring.
And it all seemed then, in the waste of life,
Such a very little thing !

For I thought of her grave below the hill,
Which the sentinel cypress-tree stands over.
And I thought . . . " were she only living still,
How I could forgive her, and love her ! "

And I swear, as I thought of her thus, in that hour,
And of how, after all, old things were best,
That I smelt the smell of that jasmine-flower
Which she used to wear in her breast.

It smelt so faint, and it smelt so sweet,
It made me creep, and it made me cold !
Like the scent that steals from the crumbling sheet
Where a mummy is half unrolled.

And I turned, and looked. She was sitting there
In a dim box, over the stage ; and dressed
In that muslin dress, with that full soft hair,
And that jasmine in her breast !

I was here : and she was there :
And the glittering horseshoe curved between :—
From my bride-betrothed, with her raven hair,
And her sumptuous, scornful mien.

To my early love, with her eyes downcast,
And over her primrose face the shade
(In short, from the Future back to the Past),
There was but a step to be made.

To my early love from my future bride
One moment I looked. Then I stole to the door,
I traversed the passage ; and down at her side
I was sitting, a moment more.

My thinking of her, or the music's strain,
Or something which never will be expressed,
Had brought her back from the grave again,
With the jasmine in her breast.

She is not dead, and she is not wed !
But she loves me now, and she loved me then !
And the very first word that her sweet lips said,
My heart grew youthful again.

The Marchioness there, of Carabas,
 She is wealthy, and young, and handsome still,
 And but for her . . . well, we'll let that pass,
 She may marry whomever she will.

But I will marry my own first love,
 With her primrose face : for old things are best,
 And the flower in her bosom, I prize it above
 The brooch in my lady's breast.

The world is filled with folly and sin,
 And Love must cling where it can, I say :
 For Beauty is easy enough to win ;
 But one isn't loved every day.

And I think, in the lives of most women and men,
 There's a moment when all would go smooth and even,
 If only the dead could find out when
 To come back, and be forgiven.

But O the smell of that jasmine flower !
 And O that music ! and O the way
 That voice rang out from the donjon tower,
Non ti scordar di me,
Non ti scordar di me !

THE PORTRAIT.

MIDNIGHT past ! Not a sound of aught
 Through the silent house, but the wind at his prayers.
 I sat by the dying fire, and thought
 Of the dear dead woman upstairs.

A night of tears ! for the gusty rain
Had ceased, but the eaves were dripping yet ;
And the moon looked forth, as though in pain,
With her face all white and wet :

Nobody with me, my watch to keep,
But the friend of my bosom, the man I love :
And grief had sent him fast to sleep
In the chamber up above.

Nobody else, in the country place
All round, that knew of my loss beside,
But the good young Priest with the Raphael-face,
Who confessed her when she died.

That good young Priest is of gentle nerve,
And my grief had moved him beyond control ;
For his lip grew white, as I could observe,
When he speeded her parting soul.

I sat by the dreary hearth alone :
I thought of the pleasant days of yore :
I said, " The staff of my life is gone :
The woman I loved is no more.

" On her cold dead bosom my portrait lies,
Which next to her heart she used to wear—
Haunting it o'er with her tender eyes
When my own face was not there.

" It is set all round with rubies red,
And pearls which a Peri might have kept.
For each ruby there, my heart hath bled :
. For each pearl, my eyes have wept."

And I said—"The thing is precious to me :
They will bury her soon in the churchyard clay ;
It lies on her heart, and lost must be,
If I do not take it away."

I lighted my lamp at the dying flame,
And crept up the stairs that creaked for fright,
Till into the chamber of death I came,
Where she lay all in white.

The moon shone over her winding-sheet.
There stark she lay on her carven bed :
Seven burning tapers about her feet,
And seven about her head.

As I stretched my hand, I held my breath ;
I turned as I drew the curtains apart :
I dared not look on the face of death :
I knew where to find her heart.

I thought at first, as my touch fell there,
It had warmed that heart to life, with love ;
For the thing I touched was warm, I swear,
And I could feel it move.

'Twas the hand of a man, that was moving slow
O'er the heart of the dead,—from the other side :
And at once the sweat broke over my brow :
"Who is robbing the corpse?" I cried.

Opposite me, by the tapers' light,
The friend of my bosom, the man I loved,
Stood over the corpse, and all as white,
And neither of us moved.

“What do you here, my friend?” . . . The man
Looked first at me, and then at the dead.

“There is a portrait here,” he began;
“There is. It is mine,” I said.

Said the friend of my bosom, “Yours, no doubt,
The portrait was, till a month ago,
When this suffering angel took that out,
And placed mine there, I know.”

“This woman, she loved me well,” said I.

“A month ago,” said my friend to me:
“And in your throat,” I groaned, “you lie!”
He answered . . . “Let us see.”

“Enough!” I returned, “let the dead decide:
And whose soever the portrait prove,
His shall it be, when the cause is tried,
Where Death is arraigned by Love.”

We found the portrait there, in its place:
We opened it by the tapers’ shine:
The gems were all unchanged: the face
Was—neither his nor mine.

“One nail drives out another, at least!
The face of the portrait there,” I cried,
“Is our friend’s the Raphael-faced young Priest,
Who confessed her when she died.”

The setting is all of rubies red,
And pearls which a Peri might have kept.
For each ruby there my heart hath bled:
For each pearl my eyes have wept.

BABYLONIA.

ENOUGH of simpering and grimace !
Enough of damning one's soul for nothing !
Enough of Vacuity trimmed with lace !
And Poverty proud of her purple clothing !
In Babylon, whene'er there's a wind
(Whether it blow rain, or whether it blow sand),
The weathercocks change their mighty mind ;
And the weathercocks are forty thousand.
Forty thousand weathercocks,
Each well-minded to keep his place,
Turning about in the great and small ways !
Each knows, whatever the weather's shocks,
That the wind will never blow in his face ;
And in Babylon the wind blows always.

I cannot tell how it may strike you,
But it strikes me now, for the first and last time,
That there may be better things to do,
Than watching the weathercocks for pastime.
And I wish I were out of Babylon,
Out of sight of column and steeple,
Out of fashion and form, for one,
And out of the midst of this double-faced people.
Enough of catgut ! Enough of the sight
Of the dolls it sets dancing all the night !
For there is a notion come to me,
As here, in Babylon, I am lying,
That far away, over the sea,
And under another moon and star,
Braver, more beautiful beings are dying

(Dying, not dancing, dying, dying !)

To a music nobler far.

Full well I know that, before it came
To inhabit this feeble, faltering frame,
My soul was weary ; and, ever since then,
It has seemed to me, in the stir and bustle
Of this eager world of women and men,
That my life was tired before it began,
That even the child had fatigued the man,
And brain, and heart, have done their part
To wear out sinew and muscle.

Yet, sometimes, a wish has come to me,
To wander, wander, I know not where,
Out of the sight of all that I see,
Out of the hearing of all that I hear ;
Where only the tawny, bold wild beast
Roams his realms ; and find, at least,
The strength which even the beast finds there.
A joy, though but a savage joy ;—
Were it only to find the food I need,
The scent to track, and the force to destroy,
And the very appetite to feed ;
The bliss of the sense without the thought,
And the freedom, for once in my life, from aught
That fills my life with care.

And never this thought hath so wildly crossed
My mind, with its wildering, strange temptation,
As just when I was enjoying the most
The blessings of what is called Civilization :—

The glossy boot which tightens the foot ;
The club at which my friend was black-balled
(I am sorry, of course, but one must be exclusive) ;
The yellow kid glove whose shape I approve,
And the journal in which I am kindly called
Whatever's not libellous—only abusive :
The ball to which I am careful to go,
Where the folks are so cool, and the rooms are so hot ;
The opera, which shows one what music—is not ;
And the simper from Lady..... but why should you
know ?

Yet, I am a part of the things I despise,
Since my life is bound by their common span :
And each idler I meet, in square or in street,
Hath within him what all that's without him belies,—
The miraculous, infinite heart of man,
With its countless capabilities !
The sleekest guest at the general feast,
That at every sip, as he sups, says grace,
Hath in him a touch of the untamed beast ;
And change of nature is change of place.
The judge on the bench, and the scamp at the dock,
Have, in each of them, much that is common to both ;
Each is part of the parent stock,
And their difference comes of their different cloth.
"Twixt the Seven Dials and Exeter Hall
The gulf that is fixed is not so wide :
And the fool that, last year, at Her Majesty's Ball,
Sickened me so with his simper of pride,
Is the hero now heard of, the first on the wall,
With the bayonet-wound in his side.

Oh, for the times which were (if any
Time be heroic) heroic indeed !
 When the men were few,
 And the deeds to do
Were mighty, and many,
 And each man in his hand held a noble deed.
Now the deeds are few,
 And the men are many,
 And each man has, at most, but a noble need.

Blind fool! . . . I know that all acted time
 By that which succeeds it, is ever received
As calmer, completer, and more sublime,
 Only because it is finished : because
We only behold the thing it achieved ;
 We behold not the thing that it was.
For, while it stands whole, and immutable,
 In the marble of memory,—we, who have seen
But the statue before us,—how can we tell
 What the men that have hewn at the block may have
 been?
Their passion is merged in its passionlessness ;
 Their strife in its stillness closed forever :
Their change upon change, in its changelessness :
 In its final achievement, their feverish endeavour :
Who knows how sculptor on sculptor starved
 With the thought in the head by the hand uncarved ?
And he that spread out in its ample repose
 That grand, indifferent, godlike brow,
How vainly his own may have ached, who knows,
 'Twixt the laurel above and the wrinkle below ?

So again to Babylon I come back,
Where this fettered giant of Human Nature.
Cramped in limb, and constrained in stature,
In the torture-chamber of Vanity lies ;
Helpless and weak, and compelled to speak
The things he must despise.

You stars, so still in the midnight blue,
Which over these huddling roofs I view,
Out of reach of this Babylonian riot,—
We so restless, and you so quiet,
What is difference 'twixt us and you ?

You each may have pined with a pain divine,
For aught I know,
As wildly as this weak heart of mine,
In an Age ago :

For whence should you have that stern repose,
Which, here, dwells but on the brows of those
Who have lived, and survived life's fever,
Had you never known the ravage and fire
Of that inexpressible Desire,
Which wastes and calcines whatever is less
In the soul, than the soul's deep consciousness
Of a life that shall last forever ?

Doubtless, doubtless, again and again,
Many a mouth has starved for bread
In a city whose wharves are choked with corn ;
And many a heart hath perished dead
From being too utterly forlorn,
In a city whose streets are choked with men.
Yet the bread is there, could one find it out :

And there is a heart for a heart, no doubt,
Wherever a human heart may beat;
And room for courage, and truth, and love,
To move, wherever a man may move,
In the thickliest crowded street.

O Lord of the soul of man, whose will
Made earth for man, and man for heaven,
Help all thy creatures to fulfil
The hopes to each one given !
So fair thou mad'st, and so complete,
The little daisies at our feet;
So sound, and so robust in heart,
The patient beasts, that bear their part
In this world's labour, never asking
The reason of its ceaseless tasking;
Hast thou made man, though more in kind,
By reason of his soul and mind,
Yet less in unison with life,
By reason of an inward strife,
Than these, thy simpler creatures, are,
Submitted to his use and care ?

For these, indeed, appear to live
To the full verge of their own power,
Nor ever need that time should give
To life one space beyond the hour.
They do not pine for what is not ;
Nor quarrel with the things which are ;
Their yesterdays are all forgot ;
Their morrows are not feared from far :
They do not weep, and wail, and moan,

For what is past, or what's to be,
Or what's not yet, and may be never ;
They do not their own lives disown,
Nor haggle with eternity
For some unknown Forever.

Ah yet,—in this must I believe
That man is nobler than the rest :—
That, looking in on his own breast,
He measures thus his strength and size
With supernatural destinies,
Whose shades o'er all his being fall ;
And, in that dread comparison
'Twixt what is deemed and what is done,
He can, at intervals, perceive
How weak he is, and small.

Therefore, he knows himself a child,
Set in this rudimental star,
To learn the alphabet of Being ;
By straws dismayed, by toys beguiled,
Yet conscious of a home afar ;
With all things here but ill agreeing,
Because he trusts, in manhood's prime,
To walk in some celestial clime ;
Sit in his Father's house ; and be
The inmate of Eternity.

THE CASTLE OF KING MACBETH.

THIS is the castle of King Macbeth.
And here he feasts—when the daylight wanes,
And the moon goes softly over the heath—
His Earls and Thanes.

A hundred harpers with harps of gold
Harp thorough the night high festival :
And the sound of the music they make is rolled
From hall to hall.

They drink deep healths till the rafters rock
In the Banquet Hall ; and the shout is borne
To the courts outside, where the crowing cock
Is waked ere morn.

And the castle is all in a blaze of light
From cresset, and torch, and sconce : and there
Each warrior dances all the night
With his lady fair.

They dance and sing till the raven is stirred
On the wicked elm-tree outside in the gloom :
And the rustle of silken robes is heard
From room to room.

But there is one room in that castle old,
In a lonely turret where no one goes,
And a dead man sits there, stark and cold,
Whom no one knows.

KING SOLOMON.

KING Solomon stood, in his crown of gold,
Between the pillars, before the altar
In the House of the Lord. And the King was old,
And his strength began to falter,
So that he leaned on his ebony staff,
Sealed with the seal of the Pentegraph.

All of the golden fretted work,
Without and within so rich and rare,
As high as the nest of the building stork,
Those pillars of cedar were :—
Wrought up to the brazen chapters
Of the Sidonian artificers.

And the King stood still as a carven king,
The carven cedar beams below,
In his purple robe, with his signet ring,
And his beard as white as snow,
And his face to the Oracle, where the hymn
Dies under the wing of the cherubim.

The wings fold over the Oracle,
And cover the heart and eyes of God :
The Spouse with pomegranate, lily, and bell,
Is glorious in her abode ;
For with gold of Ophir, and scent of myrrh,
And purple of Tyre, The King clothed her.

By the soul of each slumbrous instrument
Drawn soft through the musical misty air,

The stream of the folk that came and went,
For worship, and praise, and prayer,
Flowed to and fro, and up and down,
And round The King in his golden crown.

And it came to pass, as The King stood there,
And looked on the house he had built, with pride,
That the Hand of The Lord came unaware,
And touched him ; so that he died,
In his purple robe, with his signet ring,
And the crown wherewith they had crowned him king.

And the stream of the folk that came and went
To worship the Lord with prayer and praise,
Went softly ever, in wonderment,
For The King stood there always ;
And it was solemn and strange to behold
That dead king crowned with a crown of gold.

For he leaned on his ebony staff upright ;
And over his shoulders the purple robe ;
And his hair, and his beard, were both snow-white ;
And the fear of him filled the globe ;
So that none dared touch him, though he was dead,
He looked so royal about the head.

And the moons were changed : and the years rolled on :
And the new king reigned in the old king's stead :
And men were married and buried anon :
But The King stood, stark and dead ;
Leaning upright on his ebony staff ;
Preserved by the sign of the Pentegraph.

And the stream of life, as it went and came,
 Ever for worship and praise and prayer,
 Was awed by the face, and the fear, and the fame
 Of the dead king standing there ;
 For his hair was so white, and his eyes so cold,
 That they left him alone with his crown of gold.

So King Solomon stood up, dead, in the House
 Of The Lord, held there by the Pentagraph,
 Until out from a pillar there ran a red mouse,
 And gnawed through his ebony staff :
 Then, flat on his face, The King fell down :
 And they picked from the dust a golden crown.*

THE CHESS-BOARD.

MY little love, do you remember,
 Ere we were grown so sadly wise,
 Those evenings in the bleak December,
 Curtained warm from the snowy weather,
 When you and I played chess together,
 Checkmated by each other's eyes ?
 Ah, still I see your soft white hand
 Hovering warm o'er Queen and Knight.
 Brave Pawns in valiant battle stand :

* My knowledge of the Rabbinical legend which suggested this Poem is one among the many debts I owe to my friend Robert Browning. I hope these lines may remind him of hours which his society rendered precious and delightful to me, and which are among the most pleasant memories of my life.

The double Castles guard the wings :
The Bishop bent on distant things,
Moves, sidling through the fight.

Our fingers touch ; our glances meet,
And falter ; falls your golden hair
Against my cheek ; your bosom sweet
Is heaving. Down the field, your Queen
Rides slow her soldiery all between,
And checks me unaware.

Ah me ! the little battle's done,
Dispersed is all its chivalry ;
Full many a move, since then, have we
Mid Life's perplexing checkers made,
And many a game with Fortune played,—

What is it we have won ?
This, this at least—if this alone ;—
That never, never, never more,
As in those old still nights of yore
(Ere we were grown so sadly wise),
Can you and I shut out the skies,
Shut out the world, and wintry weather,
And, eyes exchanging warmth with eyes,
Play chess, as then we played, together !

SONG.

IN the warm, black mill-pool winking,
The first doubtful star shines blue :
And alone here I lie thinking
O such happy thoughts of you !

Up the porch the roses clamber,
And the flowers we sowed last June ;
And the casement of your chamber
Shines between them to the moon.

Look out, love ! fling wide the lattice :
Wind the red rose in your hair,
And the little white clematis
Which I plucked for you to wear :

Or come down, and let me hear you
Singing in the scented grass,
Through tall cowslips nodding near you,
Just to touch you as you pass.

For, where you pass, the air
With warm hints of love grows wise :
You—the dew on your dim hair,
And the smile in your soft eyes !

From the hayfield comes your brother ;
There, your sisters stand together,
Singing clear to one another
Through the dark blue summer weather ;

And the maid the latch is clinking,
As she lets her lover through :
But alone, love, I lie thinking
O such tender thoughts of you !

CHANGES.

WHOM first we love, you know, we seldom wed.
Time rules us all. And Life, indeed, is no-
The thing we planned it out ere hope was dead.
And then, we women cannot choose our lot.

Much must be borne which it is hard to bear :
Much given away which it were sweet to keep.
God help us all ! who need, indeed, His care.
And yet, I know, the Shepherd loves his sheep.

My little boy begins to babble now
Upon my knee his earliest infant prayer.
He has his father's eager eyes, I know.
And, they say too, his mother's sunny hair.

But when he sleeps and smiles upon my knee,
And I can feel his light breath come and go,
I think of one (Heaven help and pity me !)
Who loved me, and whom I loved, long ago.

Who might have been . . . ah, what I dare not think !
We all are changed. God judges for us best.
God help us do our duty, and not shrink,
And trust in Heaven humbly for the rest.

But blame us women not, if some appear
Too cold at times ; and some too gay and light.
Some griefs gnaw deep. Some woes are hard to bear.
Who knows the Past ? and who can judge us right ?

Ah, were we judged by what we might have been,
 And not by what we are, too apt to fall !
 My little child—he sleeps and smiles between
 These thoughts and me. In heaven we shall know all !

Sydney Dobell.

HOW'S MY BOY?

“ **H**O, Sailor of the sea !
 How's my boy—my boy ?”

“ What's your boy's name, good wife,
 And in what good ship sailed he ?”

“ My boy John—
 He that went to sea—
 What care I for the ship, sailor ?
 My boy's my boy to me.

“ You come back from sea,
 And not know my John ?
 I might as well have asked some landsman
 Yonder down in the town.
 There's not an ass in all the parish
 But he knows my John.

“ How's my boy—my boy ?
 And unless you let me know,
 I'll swear you are no sailor,
 Elue jacket or no,
 Brass buttons or no, sailor,
 Anchor and crown or no !

Sure his ship was the 'Jolly Briton'?"—
 "Speak low, woman, speak low!"
 "And why should I speak low, sailor,
 About my own boy, John?
 If I was loud as I am proud,
 I'd sing him over the town!
 Why should I speak low, sailor?"—
 "That good ship went down!"

"How's my boy—my boy?
 What care I for the ship, sailor?
 I was never aboard her.
 Be she afloat or be she aground,
 Sinking or swimming, I'll be bound,
 Her owners can afford her!
 I say, how's my John?"—
 "Every man on board went down,
 Every man aboard her."—
 "How's my boy—my boy?
 What care I for the men, sailor?
 I'm not their mother—
 How's my boy—my boy?
 Tell me of him, and no other!
 How's my boy—my boy?"

TOMMY'S DEAD.

YOU may give over plough, boys,
 You may take the gear to the stead,
 All the sweat o' your brow, boys,
 Will never get beer and bread.

The seed's waste, I know, boys,
There's not a blade will grow, boys,
'Tis cropped out, I trow, boys,
And Tommy's dead !

Send the colt to fair, boys,
He's going blind, as I said—
My old eyes can't bear, boys,
To see him in the shed ;
The cow's dry and spare, boys,
She's neither here nor there, boys,
I doubt she's badly bred ;
Stop the mill to-morn, boys,
There'll be no more corn, boys,
Neither white nor red ;
There's no sign of grass, boys,
You may sell the goat and the ass, boys,
The land's not what it was, boys,
And the beasts must be fed ;
You may turn Peg away, boys,
You may pay off old Ned—
We've had a dull day, boys,
And Tommy's dead.

Move my chair on the floor, boys,
Let me turn my head :
She's standing there in the door, boys,
Your sister Winifred !
Take her away from me, boys,
Your sister Winifred !
Move me round in my place, boys,
Let me turn my head ;

Take her away from me, boys,
As she lay on her death-bed—
The bones of her thin face, boys,
As she lay on her death-bed !
I don't know how it be, boys,
When all's done and said,
But I see her looking at me, boys,
Wherever I turn my head ;
Out of the big oak-tree, boys,
Out of the garden-bed,
And the lily as pale as she, boys,
And the rose that used to be red.

There's something not right, boys,
But I think it's not in my head ;
I've kept my precious sight, boys—
The Lord be hallowèd !
Outside and in
The ground is cold to my tread ;
The hills are wizen and thin,
The sky is shrivelled and shred ;
The hedges down by the loan
I can count them bone by bone,
The leaves are open and spread—
But I see the teeth of the land,
And hands like a dead man's hand,
And the eyes of a dead man's head !
There's nothing but cinders and sand,
The rat and the mouse have fed,
And the summer's empty and cold ;
Over valley and wold,
Wherever I turn my head,

There's a mildew and a mould,
The sun's going out over-head,
And I'm very old,
And Tommy's dead.

What am I staying for, boys ?
You're all born and bred :
'Tis fifty years and more, boys,
Since wife and I were wed ;
And she's gone before, boys,
And Tommy's dead.

She was always sweet, boys,
Upon his curly head,
She knew she'd never see't, boys,
And she stole off to bed.
I've been sitting up alone, boys,
For he'd come home, he said ;
But it's time I was gone, boys,
For Tommy's dead !

Put the shutters up, boys,
Bring out the beer and bread ;
Make haste and sup, boys,
For my eyes are heavy as lead :
There's something wrong i' the cup, boys,
There's something ill wi' the bread ;
I don't care to sup, boys,
And Tommy's dead.

I'm not right, I doubt, boys,
I've such a sleepy head ;
I shall never more be stout, boys,
You may carry me to bed.

What are you about, boys?—

The prayers are all said,
The fire's raked out, boys,
And Tommy's dead!

The stairs are too steep, boys,

You may carry me to the head;
The night's dark and deep, boys,
Your mother's long in bed.
'Tis time to go to sleep, boys,
And Tommy's dead!

I'm not used to kiss, boys,

You may shake my hand instead.
All things go amiss, boys,
You may lay me where she is, boys,
And I'll rest my old head:
'Tis a poor world, this, boys,
And Tommy's dead!

THE LITTLE GIRL'S SONG.

DO not mind my crying, Papa, I am not crying for pain,
Do not mind my shaking, Papa, I am not shaking
with fear;
Though the wild wild wind is hideous to hear,
And I see the snow and the rain.
When will you come back again,
Papa, Papa?

Somebody else that you love, Papa,
Somebody else that you dearly love

Is weary, like me, because you're away.
Sometimes I see her lips tremble and move,
And I seem to know what they're going to say ;
And every day, and all the long day,
I long to cry, "O Mamma, Mamma,
When will Papa come back again ?"
But before I can say it I see the pain
Creeping up on her white white cheek,
As the sweet sad sunshine creeps up the whit' wall,
And then I am sorry, and fear to speak ;
And slowly the pain goes out of her cheek,
As the sad sweet sunshine goes from the wall.
Oh, I wish I were grown up wise and tall,
That I might throw my arms round her neck
And say, "Dear Mamma, oh, what is it all
That I see and see and do not see
In your white white face all the livelong day ?"
But she hides her grief from a child like me.
When will you come back again,
Papa, Papa ?

Where were you going, Papa, Papa ?
All this long while have you been on the sea ?
When she looks as if she saw far away,
Is she thinking of you, and what does she see ?
Are the white sails blowing,
And the blue men rowing,
And are you standing on the high deck
Where we saw you stand till the ship grew gray,
And we watched and watched till the ship was a speck,
And the dark came first to you, far away ?
I wish I could see what she can see,
But she hides her grief from a child like me.

When will you come back again,
Papa, Papa ?

Don't you remember, Papa, Papa,
How we used to sit by the fire, all three,
And she told me tales while I sat on her knee,
And heard the winter winds roar down the street,
And knock like men at the window pane;
And the louder they roared, oh, it seemed more sweet
To be warm and warm as we used to be,
Sitting at night by the fire, all three.
When will you come back again,
Papa, Papa ?

Papa, I like to sit by the fire ;
Why does she sit far away in the cold ?
If I had but somebody wise and old,
That every day I might cry and say,
" Is she changed, do you think, or do I forget ?
Was she always as white as she is to-day ?
Did she never carry her head up higher ?"
Papa, Papa, if I could but know !
Do you think her voice was always so low ?
Did I always see what I seem to see
When I wake up at night and her pillow is wet ;
You used to say her hair it was gold—
It looks like silver to me.
But still she tells the same tale that she told,
She sings the same songs when I sit on her knee,
And the house goes on as it went long ago,
When we lived together, all three.
Sometimes my heart seems to sink, Papa,

And I feel as if I could be happy no more.
Is she changed, do you think, Papa,
Or did I dream she was brighter before?
She makes me remember my snowdrop, Papa,
That I forgot in thinking of you.

The sweetest snowdrop that ever I knew!
But I put it out of the sun and the rain;
It was green and white when I put it away,
It had one sweet bell and green leaves four;
It was green and white when I found it that day,
It had one pale bell and green leaves four;
But I was not glad of it any more.
Was it changed, do you think, Papa,
Or did I dream it was brighter before?

Do not mind my crying, Papa,
I am not crying for pain.
Do not mind my shaking, Papa,
I am not shaking for fear;
Though the wild wild wind is hideous to hear,
And I see the snow and the rain.
When will you come back again,
Papa, Papa?

AFLOAT AND ASHORE.

TUMBLE and rumble, and grumble and snort,
Like a whale to starboard, a whale to port;
Tumble and rumble, and grumble and snort,
And the steamer steams through the sea, love!

I see the ship on the sea, love,
I stand alone

On this rock,
 The sea does not shock
 The stone ;
 The waters around it are swirled,
 But under my feet
 I feel it go down
 To where the hemispheres meet
 At the adamant heart of the world.
 Oh, that the rock would move !
 Oh, that the rock would roll
 To meet thee over the sea, love !
 Surely my mighty love
 Should fill it like a soul,
 And it should bear me to thee, love ;
 Like a ship on the sea, love !
 Bear me, bear me, to thee, love !

Guns are thundering, seas are sundering, crowds are wondering,
 Low on our lee, love.
 Over and over the cannon-clouds cover brother and lover,
 but over and over
 The whirl-wheels trundle the sea, love,
 And on through the loud pealing pomp of her cloud
 The great ship is going to thee, love ;
 Blind to her mark, like a world thro' the dark,
 Thundering, sundering, to the crowds wondering,
 Thundering ever to thee, love.

I have come down to thee coming to me, love,
 I stand, I stand
 On the solid sand,
 I see thee coming to me, love ;

The sea runs up to me on the sand,
I start—'tis as if thou hadst stretched thine hand
And touched me through the sea, love.
I feel as if I must die,
For there's something longs to fly,
Fly and fly, to thee, love.
As the blood of the flower ere she blows
Is beating up to the sun,
And her roots do hold her down,
And it blushes and breaks undone
In a rose,
So my blood is beating in me, love !
I see thee nigh and nigher.
And my soul leaps up like sudden fire,
My life's in the air
To meet thee there,
To meet thee coming to me, love !
Over the sea,
Coming to me,
Coming, and coming to me, love !
The boats are lowered : I leap in first,
Pull, boys, pull ! or my heart will burst !
More ! more !—lend me an oar !—
I'm through the breakers ! I'm on the shore !
I see thee waiting for me, love !
A sudden storm
Of sighs and tears,
A clinching arm,
A look of years.
In my bosom a thousand cries,
A flash like light before my eyes,
And I am lost in thee, love !

FOR CHARITY'S SAKE.

“O H, dark-eyed maid,”
The soldier said,
“I’ve been wounded in many a fray,
But such a dart
As you shoot to my heart,
I never felt till to-day.

“Then give to me
Kisses, one, two, three,
All for dear Charity’s sake.
And pity my pain,
And meet me again,
Or else my heart must break.”

Peggy was kind,
She would save the blind
Black fly that shimmered the ale,
And her quick hand stopped
If a grass-moth dropped
In the drifted snows of the pail.

One, two, three,
Kisses gave she,
All for dear Charity’s sake ;
And she pitied his pain,
And she met him again,
For fear his heart should break.

The bugle blew,
The merry flag flew,
The squadron clattered the town ;

The twigs were bright on the minster elm,
He wore a primrose in his helm
As they clattered through the town.
Heyday, holiday, on we go !
Heyday, holiday, blow, boys, blow !
Clattering through the town.

And when the minster leaves were sear,
On a far red field by a dark sea drear,
In dust and thunder, and cheer, boys, cheer
The bold dragoon went down.

Shiver, poor Peggy, the wind blows high ;
Beg a penny as I go by,
All for sweet Charity's sake :
Hold the thin hand from the shawl,
Turn the wan face to the wall,
Turn the face, let the hot tears fall,
For fear your heart should break.

LADY CONSTANCE.

MY Love, my Lord,
I think the toil of glorious day is done
I see thee leaning on thy jewelled sword,
And a light-hearted child of France
Is dancing to thee in the sun,
And thus he carols in his dance.

“ Oh, a gallant sans peur
Is the merry chasseur,
With his fanfaron horn and his rifle ping-pang !

And his grand havresack
Of gold on his back,
His pistol cric-crac !
And his sword cling-clang !

“ Oh, to see him blithe and gay
From some hot and bloody day,
Come to dance the night away till the bugle blows ‘ au rang,’
With a wheel and a whirl
And a wheeling waltzing girl,
And his bow, ‘ place aux dames !’ and his oath, ‘ feu et sang !’
And his hop and his fling
Till his gold and silver ring
To the clatter and the clash of his sword cling-clang !

“ But hark,
Through the dark,
Up goes the well-known shout !
The drums beat the turn-out !
Cut short your courting, Monsieur l’Amant !
Saddle ! mount ! march ! trot !
Down comes the storm of shot,
The foe is at the charge ! En avant !

“ His jolly havresack
Of gold is on his back,
Hear his pistol cric-crac ! hear his rifle ping-pang !

‘ Vive l’Empereur !
And where’s the Chasseur ?

“ He’s in
Among the din
Steel to steel cling-clang !”

And thou within the doorway of thy tent
Leanest at ease, with careless brow unbent,
Watching the dancer in as pleased a dream,
As if he were a gnat i' the evening gleam,
And thou and I were sitting side by side
Within the happy bower
Where oft at this same hour
We watched them the sweet year I was a bride.

My Love, my Lord,
Learning so grandly on thy jewelled sword,
Is there no thought of home to whisper thee,
None can relieve the weary guard I keep,
None wave the flag of breathing truce for me,
Nor sound the hours to slumber or to weep ?
Once in a moon the bugle breaks thy rest,
I count my days by trumpets and alarms :
Thou liest down in thy war-cloak and art blest,
While I, who cannot sleep but in thine arms,
Wage night and day fresh fields unknown to fame,
Arm, marshal, march, charge, fight, fall, faint, and die,
Know all a soldier can endure but shame,
And every chance of warfare but to fly.
I do not murmur at my destiny :
It can but go with love, with whom it came,
And love is like the sun—his light is sweet,
And sweet his shadow—welcome both to me !
Better forever to endure that hurt
Which thou canst taste but once than once to lie
At ease when thou hast anguish. Better I
Be often sad when thou art gay than gay
One moment of thy sorrow. Though I pray

Too oft, I shall win nothing of the sky
But my unfilled desire, and thy desert
Can take it and still lack. Oh, might I stay
At the shut gates of heaven ! that so I meet
Each issuing fate, and cling about his feet,
And melt the dreadful purpose of his eye,
And not one power pass unimpleaded by
Whose bolt might be for thee ! Aye, love is sweet
In shine or shade ! But love hath jealousy,
That knowing but so little thinks so much !
And I am jealous of thee even with such
A fatal knowledge. For I wot too well
In the set season that I cannot tell
Death will be near thee. This thought doth deflour
All innocence from time. I dare not say
“Not now,” but for the instant cull the hour,
And for the hour reap all the doubtful day,
And for the day the year : and so, forlorn,
From morn till night, from startled night till morn,
Like a blind slave I bear thine heavy ill
Till thy time comes to take it : come when 'twill,
The broken slave will bend beneath it still.

William Allingham.

THE MESSENGER.

A MESSENGER, that stood beside my bed,
In words of clear and cruel import said,
(And yet methought the tone was less unkind),
“I bring thee pain of body and of mind.”

“Each gift of each must pay a toll to me ;
Nor flight, nor force, nor suit can set thee free ;
Until my brother come, I say not when :
Affliction is my name, unloved of men.”

I swooned, then bursting up in talk deranged,
Shattered to tears ; while he stood by unchanged,
I held my peace, my heart with courage burned,
And to his cold touch one faint sigh returned.

Undreamt-of wings he lifted, “For a while
I vanish. Never be afraid to smile
Lest I waylay thee : curse me not ; nay, love ;
That I may bring thee tidings from above.”

And often since, by day or night, descends
The face obdurate ; now almost a friend’s.
O ! quite to Faith ; but Frailty’s lips not dare
The word. To both this angel taught a praye :

“Lord God, thy servant, wounded and bereft,
Feels Thee upon his right hand and his left :
Hath joy in grief, and still by losing gains ;—
All this is gone, yet all myself remains !”

LOVELY MARY DONNELLY.

(TO AN IRISH TUNE.)

OH, lovely Mary Donnelly, it's you I love the best !
If fifty girls were round you, I'd hardly see the rest.
Be what it may the time of day, the place be where it will.
Sweet looks of Mary Donnelly, they bloom before me still.

Her eyes like mountain water that's flowing on a rock,
How clear they are, how dark they are ! and they give me
many a shock.

Red rowans warm in sunshine, and wetted with a shower,
Could ne'er express the charming lip that has me in its
power.

Her nose is straight and handsome, her eyebrows lifted up,
Her chin is very neat and pert, and smooth like a china
cup,

Her hair's the brag of Ireland, so weighty and so fine ;
It's rolling down upon her neck, and gathered in a twine.

The dance o' last Whit-Monday night exceeded all before ;
No pretty girl for miles about was missing from the floor ;
But Mary kept the belt of love, and O but she was gay !
She danced a jig, she sung a song, that took my heart away.

When she stood up for dancing, her steps were so complete
The music nearly killed itself to listen to her feet ;
The fiddler moaned his blindness, he heard her so much
praised,
But blessed himself he wasn't deaf when once her voice she
raised.

And evermore I'm whistling or lilting what you sung,
Your smile is always in my heart, your name beside my
tongue ;
But you've as many sweethearts as you'd count on both
your hands,
And for myself there's not a thumb or little finger stands.

Oh, you're the flower o' womankind in country or in town ;
The higher I exalt you, the lower I'm cast down.
If some great lord should come this way, and see your
beauty bright,
And you to be his lady, I'd own it was but right.

O might we live together in a lofty palace hall,
Where joyful music rises, and where scarlet curtains fall !
O might we live together in a cottage mean and small ;
With sods of grass the only roof, and mud the only wall !

O lovely Mary Donnelly, your beauty's my distress.
It's far too beauteous to be mine, but I'll never wish it less.
The proudest place would fit your face, and I am poor and
low ;
But blessings be about you, dear, wherever you may go !

THE COLD WEDDING.

BUT three days gone
Her hand was won
By suitor finely skilled to woo ;
And now come we
In pomp to see
The Church's ceremonials due.

The Bride in white
Is clad aright,
Within her carriage closely hid ;
No blush to veil—
For too, too pale
The cheek beneath each downcast lid.

White favours rest
On every breast ;
And yet methinks we seem not gay.
The church is cold,
The priest is old,—
But who will give the bride away ?

Now, delver, stand,
With spade in hand,
All mutely to discharge thy trust
Priest's words sound forth ;
They're—“Earth to earth,
Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.”

The groom is Death ;
He has no breath ;
(The wedding peals, how slow they swing !)
With icy grip
He soon will clip
Her finger with a wormy ring.

A match most fair,
This silent pair,
Now to each other given forever,
Were lovers long,
Were plighted strong
In oaths and bonds that could not sever.

Ere she was born
That vow was sworn ;
And we must lose into the ground
Her face we knew :
As thither you
And I, and all, are swiftly bound.

This Law of Laws
That still withdraws
Each mortal from all mortal ken—
If 'twere not here ;
Or we saw clear
Instead of dim as now ; what then ?
'This were not Earth, and we not Men.

THE FAIRIES.

A CHILD'S SONG.

UP the airy mountain,
Down the rushy glen,
We daren't go a-hunting
For fear of little men ;
Wee folk, good folk,
Trooping all together ;
Green jacket, red cap,
And white owl's feather !

Down along the rocky shore
Some make their home,
They live on crispy pancakes
Of yellow tide-foam ;

Some in the reeds
Of the black mountain-lake,
With frogs for their watch-dogs,
All night awake.

High on the hill-top
The old King sits ;
He is now so old and gray
He's nigh lost his wits.
With a bridge of white mist
Columbkill he crosses,
On his stately journeys
From Slieveleague to Rosses ;
Or going up with music
On cold starry nights,
To sup with the Queen
Of the gay Northern Lights.

They stole little Bridget
For seven years long ;
When she came down again
Her friends were all gone.
They took her lightly back,
Between the night and morrow,
They thought that she was fast asleep,
But she was dead with sorrow.
They have kept her ever since
Deep within the lakes,
On a bed of flag-leaves,
Watching till she wakes.
By the craggy hill-side,
Through the mosses bare,

WILLIAM ALLINGHAM.

They have planted thorn-trees
For pleasure here and there.
Is any man so daring
As dig one up in spite,
He shall find the thornies set
In his bed at night.

Up the airy mountain,
Down the rushy glen,
We daren't go a-hunting
For fear of little men ;
Wee folk, good folk,
Trooping all together ;
Green jacket, red cap,
And white owl's feather !

WISHING.

A CHILD'S SONG.

RING-TING ! I wish I were a Primrose,
A bright yellow Primrose blowing in the Spring !
The stooping boughs above me,
The wandering bee to love me,
The fern and moss to creep across,
And the Elm-tree for our king !

Nay—stay ! I wish I were an Elm-tree,
A great lofty Elm-tree, with green leaves gay !
The winds would set them dancing,
The sun and moonshine glance in,
The birds would house among the boughs,
And sweetly sing.

O—no ! I wish I were a Robin,
 A Robin or a little Wren, everywhere to go ;
 Through forest, field, or garden,
 And ask no leave or pardon,
 Till Winter comes with icy thumbs
 To ruffle up our wing !

Well—tell ! Where should I fly to,
 Where go to sleep in the dark wood or dell ?
 Before a day was over,
 Home comes the rover,
 For Mother's kiss,—sweeter this
 Than any other thing.

THE SAILOR.

A ROMAIC BALLAD.

THOU that hast a daughter
 For one to woo and wed,
 Give her to a husband
 With snow upon his head ;
 Oh, give her to an old man,
 Though little joy it be,
 Before the best young sailor
 That sails upon the sea !

How luckless is the sailor
 When sick and like to die ;
 He sees no tender mother,
 No sweetheart standing by.

Only the Captain speaks to him,—

Stand up, stand up, young man,
And steer the ship to haven,
As none beside thee can.

Thou sayst to me, “Stand up, stand up ;”

I say to thee, Take hold,
Lift me a little from the deck,
My hands and feet are cold.
And let my head, I pray thee,
With handkerchiefs be bound ;
There, take my love’s gold handkerchief,
And tie it tightly round.

Now bring the chart, the doleful chart ;

See, where these mountains meet—
The clouds are thick around their head,
The mists around their feet :
Cast anchor here ; 'tis deep and safe
Within the rocky cleft ;
The little anchor on the right,
The great one on the left.

And now to thee, O Captain,
Most earnestly I pray,
That they may never bury me
In church or cloister gray ;—
But on the windy sea-beach,
At the ending of the land,
All on the surfy sea-beach,
Deep down into the sand.

For there will come the sailors,
Their voices I shall hear,

And at casting of the anchor
The yo-ho loud and clear;
And at hauling of the anchor
The yo-ho and the cheer,—
Farewell, my love, for to thy bay
I nevermore may steer!

WOULD I KNEW!

PLAYS a child in a garden fair
Where the demigods are walking;
Playing unsuspected there
As a bird within the air,
Listens to their wondrous talking:
“Would I knew—would I knew
What it is they say and do!”

Stands a youth at city-gate,
Sees the knights go forth together,
Parleying superb, elate,
Pair by pair in princely state,
Lance and shield and haughty feather:
“Would I knew—would I knew
What it is they say and do!”

Bends a man with trembling knees
By a gulf of cloudy border;
Deaf, he hears no voice from these
Wingèd shades he dimly sees
Passing by in solemn order:
“Would I knew—O would I knew
What it is they say and do!”

NANNY'S SAILOR LAD.

NOW fare-you-well ! my bonny ship,
For I am for the shore.
The wave may flow, the breeze may blow,
They'll carry me no more.

And all as I came walking
And singing up the sand,
I met a pretty maiden,
I took her by the hand.

But still she would not raise her head,
A word she would not speak,
And tears were on her eyelids,
Dripping down her cheek.

Now grieve you for your father ?
Or husband might it be ?
Or is it for a sweetheart
That's roving on the sea ?

It is not for my father,
I have no husband dear,
But oh ! I had a sailor lad
And he is lost, I fear.

Three long years
I am grieving for his sake,
And when the stormy wind blows loud,
I lie all night awake.

I caught her in my arms,
 And she lifted up her eyes,
 I kissed her ten times over
 In the midst of her surprise.

Cheer up, cheer up, my Nanny,
 And speak again to me ;
 O dry your tears, my darling,
 For I'll go no more to sea.

I have a love, a true true love,
 And I have golden store,
 The wave may flow, the breeze may blow,
 They'll carry me no more !

SONG.

O SPIRIT of the Summer-time !
 Bring back the roses to the dells ;
 The swallow from her distant clime,
 The honey-bee from drowsy cells.

Bring back the friendship of the sun ;
 The gilded evenings, calm and late,
 When merry children homeward run,
 And peeping stars bid lovers wait.

Bring back the singing ; and the scent
 Of meadow-lands at dewy prime ;—
 O bring again my heart's content,-
 Thou Spirit of the Summer-time !

ROBIN REDBREAST.

A CHILD'S SONG.

GOOD-BY, good-by to Summer !
For Summer's nearly done ;
The garden smiling faintly,
 Cool breezes in the sun ;
Our thrushes now are silent,
 Our swallows flown away, —
But Robin's here, in coat of brown,
 And scarlet breast-knot gay.
Robin, Robin Redbreast,
 O Robin dear !
Robin sings so sweetly
 In the falling of the year.

Bright yellow, red, and orange,
The leaves come down in hosts ;
The trees are Indian Princes,
 But soon they'll turn to Ghosts
The leathery pears and apples
 Hang russet on the bough ;
It's Autumn, Autumn, Autumn late,
 'Twill soon be winter now.
Robin, Robin Redbreast,
 O Robin dear !
And what will this poor Robin do ?
 For pinching days are near.

The fireside for the cricket,
 The wheat-stack for the mouse,

When trembling night-winds whistle
 And moan all round the house ;
 The frosty ways like iron,
 The branches plumed with snow,—
 Alas ! in Winter dead and dark
 Where can poor Robin go ?
 Robin, Robin Redbreast,
 O Robin dear !
 And a crumb of bread for Robin,
 His little heart to cheer.

OLD MASTER GRUNSEY AND GOODMAN DODD.

STRATFORD-ON-AVON, A. D. 1597.

G.

GOD save you, Goodman Dodd,—a sight to see you !
 D. Save you, good Master Grunsey ! Sir, how be you ?
 G. Middlish, thank Heaven. Rare weather for the wheat.
 D. Farms will be thirsty, after all this heat.
 G. And so is we. Sit down on this here bench :
 We'll drink a pot o'yale, mun. Hither, wench !
 My service—ha ! I'm well enough, i' fegs,
 But for this plaguey rheum i' both my legs.
 Whiles I can't hardly get about : O dear !
 D. Thou see'st, we don't get younger every year.
 G. Thou'rt a young fellow yet.
 D. Well nigh three-score.
 G. I be thy elder fifteen year and more.
 Hast anv news ?

D. Not much. New-Place is sold,
And Willy Shakespeare's bought it, so I'm told.

G. What ! little Willy Shakespeare bought the Place ?
Lord bless us, how young folk gets on apace !
Sir Hugh's great house beside the grammar-school !—
This Shakespeare's (take my word upon't) no fool.
I minds him sin' he were so high's my knee ;
A stirrin' little mischief chap was he ;
One day I cotched him peltin' o' my geese
Below the church : " You let 'en swim in peace,
" Young dog ! " I says, " or I shall fling thee in."
Will was on t'other bank, and did but grin,
And call out, " Sir, you come across to here ! "

D. I knows old John this five and thirty year.
In old times many a cup he made me drink ;
But Willy weren't aborn then, I don't think,
Or might a' been a babe on's mother's arm,
When I did cart 'en fleeces from our farm.
I went a coortin' then, in Avon-Lane,
And, tho' bit further, I was always fain
To bring my cart thereby, upon a chance
To catch some foolish little nod or glance,
Or " meet me, Mary, wont 'ee, Charlote way,
" Or down at Clopton Bridge, next holiday ?"—
Health, Master Grunsey.

G. Thank'ee, friend.. 'Tis hot.
We might do worse than call another pot.
Good Mistress Nan ! Will Shakespeare, troth, I knew ;
A nimble curly-pate, and pretty too,
About the street ; he growed an idle lad,
And like enough, 'twas thought, to turn out bad :
I don't justly fairly know, but folk did say
He vexed the Lucys, and so fled away.

D. He's warth as much as Tanner Twigg to day ;
And all by plays in Lunnon.

G. Folk talks big :
Will Shakespeare warth as much as Tanner Twigg—
Tut tut ! Is Will a player-man by trade ?

D. O' course he is, o' course he is ; and made
A woundy heap o' money too, and bought
A playhouse for himself like, out and out ;
And makes up plays, beside, for 'en to act ;
Tho' I can't tell thee rightly, for a fact,
If out o' books or his own head it be.
We've other work to think on, thee and me.
They say Will's doin' finely, howsomever.

G. Why, Dodd, the little chap was always clever.
I don't know nothing now o' such-like toys ;
New fashions plenty, mun, sin' we were boys ;
We used to ha' rare mummings, puppet-shows,
And Moralities,—they can't much better those
The Death of Judas was a pretty thing,
“ So-la ! so-la !” the Devil used to sing.
But time goes on, for sure, and fashion alters.

D. Up at the Crown, last night, says young Jack Walters,
“ Willy's a great man now !”

G. A jolterhead !
What does it count for, when all's done and said ?
Ah ! who'll obey, let Will say “ Come ” or “ Go ? ”
Such-like as him don't reckon much, I trow.
Sir, they shall travel first, like thee and me,
See Lunnon, to find out what great men be.
Ay, marry, must they. Saints ! to see the Court
'Take water down to Greenwich ; there's fine sport !
Her Highness in her frills and puffs and pearls

Barons, and lords, and chamberlains, and earls,
 So thick as midges round her,—look at such
 An' thou wouldst talk of greatness ! why, the touch
 Is on their stewards and lackeys, Goodman Dodd,
 Who'll hardly answer Shakespeare wi' a nod,
 And let him come, doffed cap and bended knee.
 We knows a trifle, neighbour, thee and me.

D. We may, Sir. This here's grand old Stratford brew ;
 No better yale in Lunnon, search it through.
 New-Place ben't no such bargain, when all's done ;
 'Twas dear, I knows it.

G. Thou bought'st better, mun,
 At Hoggin Fields : all ain't alike in skill.

D. Thanks to the Lord above ! I've not done ill.
 No more has thee, friend Grunsey, in thy trade.

G. So-so. But here's young Will wi' money made,
 And money saved ; whereon I sets him down.
 Say else who likes, a credit to the town ;
 Though some do shake their heads at player-folk.

D. A very civil man, to chat and joke ;
 I've oftentimes had a bit o' talk wi' Will.

G. How doth old Master Shakespeare ?

D. Bravely still.

And so doth madam too, the comely dame.

G. And Willy's wife—what used to be her name

D. Why, Hathaway, fro' down by Shottery gate.
 I don't think she's so much about o' late.

Their son, thou see'st, the only son they had,
 Died last year, and she took on dreadful bad ;
 And so the fayther did awhile, I'm told.
 This boy o' theirs was nine or ten year old.
 —Willy himself may bide here now, mayhap.

G. He always was a clever little chap.
 I'm glad o' his luck, an' 'twere for old John's sake.
 Your arm, sweet Sir. Oh, how my legs do ache!

THESE LITTLE SONGS.

THESE little Songs,
 Found here and there,
 Single, or throngs,
 Floating in air,
 Springing from lea,
 Or hid in the sea,—
 Somehow or other
 Have come together,
 I can't tell how,
 But certainly know
 It never was wit on an inkstand begot 'em ;
 Remember the place
 And moment of grace,
 Summer or winter, spring-time or autumn,
 By sun, moon, stars,
 Or a coal in the bars,
 In market or church,
 Graveyard or dance,
 When they came without search,
 Were found as by chance.
 A word, a line,
 You may say are mine ;
 But the best in the songs,
 Whatever it be,
 To you, and to me,
 And to no one belongs.

William Morris.

THE DEFENCE OF GUENEVERE.

BUT, knowing now that they would have her speak,

She threw her wet hair backward from her brow,
Her hand close to her mouth touching her cheek,

As though she had had there a shameful blow,
And feeling it shameful to feel ought but shame
All through her heart, yet felt her cheek burned so,

She must a little touch it ; like one lame
She walked away from Gauwaine, with her head
Still lifted up ; and on her cheek of flame

The tears dried quick ; she stopped at last and said :
“ O knights and lords, it seems but little skill
To talk of well-known things past now and dead.

“ God wot I ought to say, I have done ill,
And pray you all forgiveness heartily !
Because you must be right such great lords—still

“ Listen, suppose your time were come to die,
And you were quite alone and very weak ;
Yea, laid a dying while very mightily

“ The wind was ruffling up the narrow streak
Of river through your broad lands running well :
Suppose a hush should come, then some one speak

“ “ One of these cloths is heaven, and one is hell,
Now choose one cloth forever, which they be,
I will not tell you, you must somehow tell

“ Of your own strength and mightiness ; here, see !
Yea, yea, my lord, and you to ope your eyes,
At foot of your familiar bed to see

“ A great God’s angel standing, with such dyes,
Not known on earth, on his great wings, and hands,
Held out two ways, light from the inner skies

“ Showing him well, and making his commands
Seem to be God’s commands, moreover, too,
Holding within his hands the cloths on wands ;

“ And one of these strange choosing cloths was blue,
Wavy and long, and one cut short and red ;
No man could tell the better of the two.

“ After a shivering half-hour you said,
‘ God help ! heaven’s colour, the blue ; ’ and he said, ‘ hell ’
Perhaps you then would roll upon your bed,

“ And cry to all good men that loved you well,
‘ Ah Christ ! if only I had known, known, known ; ’
Launcelot went away, then I could tell,

“ Like wisest man how all things would be, moan,
And roll and hurt myself, and long to die,
And yet fear much to die for what was sown.

“ Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,
Whatever may have happened through these years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie.”

Her voice was low at first, being full of tears,
But as it cleared, it grew full loud and shrill,
Growing a windy shriek in all men’s ears,

A ringing in their startled brains, until
She said that Gauwaine lied, then her voice sunk,
And her great eyes began again to fill,

Though still she stood right up, and never shrunk,
But spoke on bravely, glorious lady fair!
Whatever tears her full lips may have drunk,

She stood, and seemed to think, and wrung her hair,
Spoke out at last with no more trace of shame,
With passionate twisting of her body there:

“ It chanced upon a day that Launcelot came
To dwell at Arthur’s court: at Christmas-time
This happened; when the heralds sung his name,

“ ‘ Son of King Ban of Benwick,’ seemed to chime
Along with all the bells that rang that day,
O’er the white roofs, with little change of rhyme.

“ Christmas and whitened winter passed away,
And over me the April sunshine came,
Made very awful with black hail-clouds, yea

“ And in the Summer I grew white with flame,
And bowed my head down—Autumn, and the sick
Sure knowledge things would never be the same,

“ However often Spring might be most thick
Of blossoms and buds, smote on me, and I grew
Careless of most things, let the clock tick, tick,

“ To my unhappy pulse, that beat right through
My eager body; while I laughed out loud,
And let my lips curl up at false or true,

“ Seemed cold and shallow without any cloud.
Behold my judges, then the cloths were brought :
While I was dizzied thus, old thoughts would crowd,

“ Belonging to the time ere I was bought
By Arthur’s great name and his little love,
Must I give up forever then, I thought,

“ That which I deemed would ever round me move
Glorifying all things ; for a little word,
Scarce ever meant at all, must I now prove

“ Stone-cold forever ? Pray you, does the Lord
Will that all folks should be quite happy and good ?
I love God now a little, if this cord

“ Were broken, once for all what striving could
Make me love any thing in earth or heaven.
So day by day it grew, as if one should

“ Slip slowly down some path worn smooth and even,
Down to a cool sea on a summer day ;
Yet still in slipping was there some small leaven

“ Of stretched hands catching small stones by the wav
Until one surely reached the sea at last,
And felt strange new joy as the worn head lay

“ Back, with the hair like sea-weed ; yea all past
Sweat of the forehead, dryness of the lips,
Washed utterly out by the dear waves o’ercast

“ In the lone sea, far off from any ships !
Do I not know now of a day in Spring ?
No minute of that wild day ever slips

“ From out my memory ; I hear thrushes sing,
And wheresoever I may be, straightway
Thoughts of it all come up with most fresh sting ;

“ I was half mad with beauty on that day,
And went without my ladies all alone,
In a quiet garden walled round every way ;

“ I was right joyful of that wall of stone,
That shut the flowers and trees up with the sky,
And trebled all the beauty : to the bone,

“ Yea right through to my heart, grown very shy
With weary thoughts, it pierced, and made me glad ;
Exceedingly glad, and I knew verily,

“ A little thing just then had made me mad ;
I dared not think, as I was wont to do,
Sometimes, upon my beauty ; if I had

“ Held out my long hand up against the blue,
And, looking on the tenderly darkened fingers,
Thought that by rights one ought to see quite through,

“ There, see you, where the soft still light yet lingers,
Round by the edges ; what should I have done,
If this had joined with yellow spotted singers,

“ And startling green drawn upward by the sun ?
But shouting, loosed out, see now ! all my hair,
And trancedly stood watching the west wind run

“ With faintest half-heard breathing sound—why there
I lose my head e'en now in doing this ;
But shortly listen—In that garden fair

“ Came Launcelot walking ; this is true, the kiss
Wherewith we kissed in meeting that spring day,
I scarce dare talk of the remembered bliss,

“ When both our mouths went wandering in one way,
And aching sorely, met among the leaves ;
Our hands being left behind strained far away.

“ Never within a yard of my bright sleeves
Had Launcelot come before—and now, so nigh !
After that day why is it Guenevere grieves ?

“ Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,
Whatever happened on through all those years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie.

“ Being such a lady could I weep these tears
If this were true ? A great queen such as I
Having sinned this way, straight her conscience sears ;

“ And afterwards she liveth hatefully,
Slaying and poisoning, certes never weeps,—
Gauwaine, be friends now, speak me lovingly.

“ Do I not see how God’s dear pity creeps
All through your frame, and trembles in your mouth ?
Remember in what grave your mother sleeps,

“ Buried in some place far down in the south,
Men are forgetting as I speak to you ;
By her head severed in that awful drouth

‘ Of pity that drew Agravaine’s fell blow,
I pray your pity ! let me not scream out
Forever after, when the shrill winds blow

“ Through half your castle-locks ! let me not shout
Forever after in the winter night
When you ride out alone ! in battle-rout

“ Let not my rusting tears make your sword light !
Ah ! God of mercy how he turns away !
So, ever must I dress me to the fight,

“ So—let God’s justice work ! Gauwaine, I say,
See me hew down your proofs : yea all men know,
Even as you said, how Mellyagraunce one day,

“ One bitter day in *la Fausse Garde*, for so
All good knights held it after, saw—
Yea, sirs, by cursed unknightly outrage ; though

“ You, Gauwaine, held his word without a flaw,
This Mellyagraunce saw blood upon my bed—
Whose blood then pray you ? is there any law

“ To make a queen say why some spots of red
Lie on her coverlet ? or will you say,
‘ Your hands are white, lady, as when you wed,

“ ‘ Where did you bleed ? ’ and must I stammer out, ‘ Nay,
I blush indeed, fair lord, only to rend
My sleeve up to my shoulder, where there lay

“ ‘ A knife-point last night : ’ so must I defend
The honour of the lady Guenevere ?
Not so, fair lords, even if the world should end

“ This very day, and you were judges here
Instead of God. Did you see Mellyagraunce
When Launcelot stood by him ? what white fear

“ Curdled his blood, and how his teeth did dance,
His side sink in ? as my knight cried and said,
‘ Slayer of unarmed men, here is a chance !

“ ‘ Setter of traps, I pray you guard your head,
By God, I am so glad to fight with you,
Stripper of ladies, that my hand feels lead

“ ‘ For driving weight ; hurrah now ! draw and do,
For all my wounds are moving in my breast,
And I am getting mad with waiting so.’

“ He struck his hands together o'er the beast,
Who fell down flat, and grovelled at his feet,
And groaned at being slain so young—‘ at least.’

“ My knight said, ‘ Rise you, Sir, who are so fleet
At catching ladies, half-armed will I fight,
My left side all uncovered !’ then I weet.

“ Up sprang Sir Mellyagraunce with great delight
Upon his knave’s face ; not until just then
Did I quite hate him, as I saw my knight

“ Along the lists look to my stake and pen
With such a joyous smile, it made me sigh
From agony beneath my waist-chain, when

“ The fight began, and to me they drew nigh ;
Ever Sir Launcelot kept him on the right,
And traversed warily, and ever high

“ And fast leaped caitiff’s sword, until my knight
Sudden threw up his sword to his left hand,
Caught it, and swung it ; that was all the fight.

“ Except a spout of blood on the hot land ;
For it was hottest summer ; and I know
I wondered how the fire, while I should stand,

“ And burn, against the heat, would quiver so,
Yards above my head ; thus these matters went ;
Which things were only warnings of the woe

“ That fell on me. Yet Mellyagraunce was shent,
For Mellyagraunce had fought against the Lord
Therefore, my lords, take heed lest you be blent

“ With all this wickedness ; say no rash word
Against me, being so beautiful ; my eyes,
Wept all away to gray, may bring some sword

“ To drown you in your blood ; see my breast rise,
Like waves of purple sea, as here I stand ;
And how my arms are moved in wonderful wise,

“ Yea also at my full heart’s strong command,
See through my long throat how the words go up
In ripples to my mouth ; how in my hand

“ The shadow lies like wine within a cup
Of marvellously coloured gold ; yea now
This little wind is rising, look you up,

“ And wonder how the light is falling so
Within my moving tresses : will you dare,
When you have looked a little on my brow,

“ To say this thing is vile ? or will you care
For any plausible lies of cunning woof,
When you can see my face with no lie there

“ Forever? am I not a gracious proof—
‘ But in your chamber Launcelot was found’—
Is there a good knight then would stand aloof,

“ When a queen says with gentle queenly sound :
‘ O true as steel come now and talk with me,
I love to see your step upon the ground

“ ‘ Unwavering, also well I love to see
That gracious smile light up your face, and hear
Your wonderful words, that all mean verily

“ ‘ The thing they seem to mean: good friend, so dear
To me in every thing, come here to-night,
Or else the hours will pass most dull and drear ;

“ ‘ If you come not, I fear this time I might
Get thinking over-much of times gone by,
When I was young, and green hope was in sight ;

“ ‘ For no man cares now to know why I sigh ;
And no man comes to sing me pleasant songs,
Nor any brings me the sweet flowers that lie

“ ‘ So thick in the gardens ; therefore one so longs
To see you, Launcelot ; that we may be
Like children once again, free from all wrongs

“ ‘ Just for one night.’ Did he not come to me ?
What thing could keep true Launcelot away
If I said ‘ come ?’ there was one less than three

“ In my quiet room that night, and we were gay ,
Till sudden I rose up, weak, pale, and sick,
Because a bawling broke our dream up, yea

“ I looked at Launcelot’s face and could not speak,
For he looked helpless too, for a little while ;
Then I remember how I tried to shriek,

“ And could not, but fell down ; from tile to tile
The stones they threw up rattled o’er my head,
And made me dizzier ; till within a while

“ My maids were all about me, and my head
On Launcelot’s breast was being soothed away
From its white chattering, until Launcelot said—

“ By God ! I will not tell you more to-day,
Judge any way you will—what matters it ?
You know quite well the story of that fray,

“ How Launcelot stilled their bawling, the mad fit
That caught up Gauwaine—all, all, verily,
But just that which would save me ; these things fit

“ Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,
Whatever may have happened these long years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie !

“ All I have said is truth, by Christ’s dear tears.”
She would not speak another word, but stood
Turned sideways ; listening, like a man who hears

His brother’s trumpet sounding through the wood
Of his foes’ lances. She leaned eagerly,
And gave a slight spring sometimes, as she could

At last hear something really ; joyfully
Her cheek grew crimson, as the headlong speed
Of the roan charger drew all men to see,
The knight who came was Launcelot at good need.

A GOOD KNIGHT IN PRISON.

SIR GUY, *being in the court of a Pagan Castle.*

THIS castle where I dwell, it stands
A long way off from Christian lands,
A long way off my lady's hands,
A long way off the aspen-trees,
And murmur of the lime-tree bees.

But down the Valley of the Rose
My lady often hawking goes,
Heavy of cheer; oft turns behind,
Leaning towards the western wind
Because it bringeth to her mind
Sad whisperings of happy times,
The face of him who sings these rhymes.

King Guilbert rides beside her there,
Bends low and calls her very fair,
And strives, by pulling down his hair,
To hide from my dear lady's ken
The grisly gash I gave him, when
I cut him down at Camelot;
However he strives, he hides it not,
That tourney will not be forgot,
Besides, it is King Guilbert's lot,
Whatever he says she answers not.

Now tell me, you that are in love,
From the king's son to the wood-dove,
Which is the better, he or I?

For this king means that I should die
 In this lone Pagan castle, where
 The flowers droop in the bad air
 On the September evening.

Look, now I take mine ease and sing,
 Counting as but a little thing
 The foolish spite of a bad king.

For these vile things that hem me in,
 These Pagan beasts who live in sin,
 The sickly flowers pale and wan,
 The grim blue-bearded castellan,
 The stanchions half worn-out with rust,
 Whereto their banner vile they trust—
 Why, all these things I hold them just
 Like dragons in a missal-book,
 Wherein, whenever we may look,
 We see no horror, yea, delight
 We have, the colours are so bright;
 Likewise we note the specks of white,
 And the great plates of burnished gold.

Just so this Pagan castle old,
 And every thing I can see there,
 Sick-pining in the marsh-land air,
 I note; I will go over now,
 Like one who paints with knitted brow,
 The flowers and all things one by one,
 From the snail on the wall to the setting sun

Four great walls, and a little one
 That leads down to the barbican,

Which walls with many spears they man,
When news comes to the castellan
Of Launcelot being in the land.

And as I sit here, close at hand
Four spikes of sad sick sunflowers stand,
'The castellan with a long wand
Cuts down their leaves as he goes by,
Ponderingly, with screwed-up eye,
And fingers twisted in his beard—
Nay, was it a knight's shout I heard ?
I have a hope makes me afeard :
It cannot be, but if some dream
Just for a minute made me deem
I saw among the flowers there
My lady's face with long red hair,
Pale, ivory-coloured dear face come,
As I was wont to see her some
Fading September afternoon,
And kiss me, saying nothing, soon
To leave me by myself again ;
Could I get this by longing : vain !

The castellan is gone : I see
On one broad yellow flower a bee
Drunk with much honey—

Christ ! again,
Some distant knight's voice brings me pain,
I thought I had forgot to feel,
I never heard the blissful steel
These ten years past ; year after year,
Through all my hopeless sojourn here,
No Christian pennon has been near ;

Laus Deo ! the dragging wind draws on
 Over the marshes, battle won,
 Knights' shouts, and axes hammering,
 Yea, quicker now the dint and ring
 Of flying hoofs ; ah ! castellan,
 When they come back count man for man,
 Say whom you miss.

THE PAGANS, *from the battlements.*

Mahound to aid !
 Why flee ye so like men dismayed ?

THE PAGANS, *from without.*

Nay, haste ! for here is Launcelot,
 Who follows quick upon us, hot
 And shouting with his men-at-arms.

SIR GUY.

Also the Pagans raise alarms,
 And ring the bells for fear ; at last
 My prison walls will be well past.

SIR LAUNCELOT, *from outside.*

Ho ! in the name of the Trinity,
 Let down the drawbridge quick to me,
 And open doors, that I may see
 Guy the good knight.

THE PAGANS, *from the battlements.*

Nay, Launcelot,
 With mere big words ye win us not.

SIR LAUNCELOT.

Bid Miles bring up la perriere,
 And archers clear the vile walls there,
 Bring back the notches to the ear,
 Shoot well together ! God to aid !
 These miscreants will be well paid.

Hurrah ! all goes together ; Miles
 Is good to win my lady's smiles
 For his good shooting—Launcelot !
 On knights apace ! this game is hot !

SIR GUY *sayeth afterwards.*

I said, I go to meet her now,
 And saying so, I felt a blow
 From some clinched hand across my brow,
 And fell down on the sunflowers
 Just as a hammering smote my ears,
 After which this I felt in sooth ;
 My bare hands throttling without ruth
 The hairy-throated castellan ;
 Then a grim fight with those that ran
 To slay me, while I shouted, “ God
 For the Lady Mary !” deep I trod
 That evening in my own red blood ;
 Nevertheless so stiff I stood,
 That when the knights burst the old wood
 Of the castle-doors, I was not dead.

I kiss the Lady Mary's head,
 Her lips, and her hair golden red,
 Because to-day we have been wed.

Frederick Tennyson.

FIRST OF MARCH.

I.

THROUGH the gaunt woods the winds are shrilling cold,
Down from the rifted rack the sunbeam pours,
Over the cold gray slopes, and stony moors ;
The glimmering water-course, the eastern wold,
And over it the whirling sail o' the mill,
The lonely hamlet with its mossy spire,
The piled city smoking like a pyre,
Fetched out of shadow gleam with light as chill.

II.

The young leaves pine, their early promise stayed ;
The Hope-deluded sorrow at the sight
Of the sweet blossoms by the treacherous light
Flattered to death, like tender love betrayed ;
And stepdames frown, and aged virgins chide ;
Relentless hearts put on their iron mood ;
The hunter's dog lies dreaming of the wood,
And dozes barking by the ingle-side.

III.

Larks twitter, martens glance, and curs from far
Rage down the wind, and straight are heard no more ;
Old wives peep out, and scold, and bang the door ;
And clanging clocks grow angry in the air ;
Sorrow and care, perplexity and pain
Frown darker shadows on the homeless one,

And the gray beggar buffeting alone
Pleads in the howling storm, and pleads in vain.

IV.

The field-fires smoke along the champaign drear,
And drive before the north wind streaming down
Bleak hill, and furrow dark, and fallow brown ;
Few living things along the land appear ;
The weary horse looks out, his mane astray,
With anxious fetlock, and uneasy eye,
And sees the market-carts go madly by
With sidelong drivers reckless of the way.

V.

The sere beech-leaves, that trembled dry and red
All the long Winter on the frosty bough,
Or slept in quiet underneath the snow,
Fly off, like resurrections of the dead ;
The horny ploughman, and his yoked ox,
Wink at the icy blasts ; and beldames bold,
Stout, and red-hooded, flee before the cold ;
And children's eyes are blinded by the shocks.

VI.

You cannot hear the waters for the wind ;
The brook that foams, and falls, and bubbles by,
Hath lost its voice—but ancient steeples sigh,
And belfries moan—and crazy ghosts, confined
In dark courts, weep, and shake the shuddering gates,
And cry from points of windy pinnacles,
Howl through the bars, and 'plain among the bells
And shriek, and wail like voices of the Fates !

VII.

And who is He, that down the mountain-side,
Swift as a shadow flying from the sun,
Between the wings of stormy Winds doth run,
With fierce blue eyes, and eyebrows knit with pride ;
Though now and then I see sweet laughters play
Upon his lips, like moments of bright heaven
Thrown 'twixt the cruel blasts of morn and even,
And golden locks beneath his hood of gray ?

VIII.

Sometimes he turns him back to wave farewell
To his pale Sire with icy beard and hair ;
Sometimes he sends before him through the air
A cry of welcome down a sunny dell ;
And while the echoes are around him ringing,
Sudden the angry wind breathes low and sweet,
Young violets show their blue eyes at his feet,
And the wild lark is heard above him singing !

N O O N.

I.

THE winds are hushed, the clouds have ceased to sail,
And lie like islands in the Ocean-day,
The flowers hang down their heads, and far away
A faint bell tinkles in a sun-drowned vale :
No voice but the cicala's whirring note—
No motion but the grasshoppers that leap—
The reaper pours into his burning throat
The last drops of his flask, and falls asleep.

II.

The rippling flood of a clear mountain stream
Fleets by, and makes sweet babble with the stones ;
The sleepy music with its murmuring tones
Lays me at noontide in Arcadian dream ;
Hard by soft night of summer bowers is seen,
With trellised vintage curtaining a cove
Whose diamond mirror paints the amber-green,
The glooming bunches, and the boughs above.

III.

Finches, and moths, and gold-dropped dragon-flies
Dip in their wings, and a young village-daughter
Is bending with her pitcher o'er the water ;
Her round arm imaged, and her laughing eyes,
And the fair brow amid the flowing hair,
Look like the Nymph's for Hylas coming up,
Pictured among the leaves, and fruitage there ;
Or the boy's self a-drowning with his cup.

IV.

Up through the vines, her urn upon her head,
Her feet unsandalled, and her dark locks free,
She takes her way, a lovely thing to see,
And like a skylark starting from its bed,
A glancing meteor, or a tongue of flame,
Or virgin waters gushing from their springs,
Her hope flies up—her heart is pure of blame—
On wings of sound—she sings ! oh how she sings

A DREAM OF AUTUMN.

I.

I HEARD a man of many winters say,
" Sometimes a sweet dream comes to me by night.
Fluttering my heart with pulses of delight,
In glory bright as day ;

II.

" 'Tis not the song of eve, the walks of morn,
Nor hearth-lit jokes, nor lamp-lit revelries,
That haunt mine ears, and flit across mine eyes,
And mock my heart forlorn.

III.

" 'Tis not the memory of my school-day years,
The hours, when I was a wild-hearted boy,
Of stormy sorrow, and of stormy joy,
That fills mine eyes with tears.

IV.

" 'Tis not the stir of manhood, nor the pain,
The flood of passions, and the pomp of life,
The toils, the care, the triumphs, and the strife
That move my soul again ;

V.

" Ah ! no, my prison-gates are open thrown,
There is a brighter earth, a lovelier sun,
One face I see, I hear one voice, but one,
'Tis She, and She alone !

VI.

“ It is a golden morning of the Spring,
My cheek is pale, and hers is warm with bloom,
And we are left in that old carven room,
And she begins to sing ;

VII.

“ The open casement quivers in the breeze,
And one large musk-rose leans its dewy grace
Into the chamber, like a happy face,
And round it swim the bees ;

VIII.

“ Sometimes her sunny brow she loves to lean
Over her harp-strings ; sometimes her blue eyes
Are diving into the blue morning skies,
Or woodland shadows green ;

IX.

“ Sometimes she looks adown a garden walk
Whence echoes of blithe converse come and go,
And two or three fair sisters, laughing low,
Go hand in hand, and talk.

X.

“ And once or twice all fearfully she gazed
Up to her gray forefathers, grim and tall,
With faded brows that frowned along the wall,
And steadfast eyes amazed.

XI.

“ She stays her song ; I linger idly by ;
She lifts her head, and then she casts it down,
One small, fair hand is o'er the other thrown,
With a low, broken sigh ;

XII.

“ I know not what I said ; what she replied
Lives, like eternal sunshine, in my heart ;
And then I murmured, Oh ! we never part,
My love, my life, my bride !

XIII.

“ And then, as if to crown that first of hours,
That hour that ne’er was mated by another,
Into the open casement her young brother
Threw a fresh wreath of flowers.

XIV.

“ And silence o’er us, after that great bliss,
Fell, like a welcome shadow ; and I heard
The far woods sighing, and a summer bird
Singing amid the trees ;

XV.

“ The sweet bird’s happy song, that streamed around,
The murmur of the woods, the azure skies,
Were graven on my heart, though ears and eyes
Marked neither sight nor sound.

XVI.

“ She sleeps in peace beneath the chancel stone,
But ah ! so clearly is the vision seen,
The dead seem raised, or Death hath never been,
Were I not here alone.

XVII.

“ Oft, as I wake at morn, I seem to see
A moment, the sweet shadow of that shade,
Her blessed face, as it were loath to fade,
Turned back to look on me.”

THE GOLDEN CITY

PART I.

I.

TWO aged men, that had been foes for life,
Met by a grave, and wept—and in those tears
They washed away the memory of their strife;
Then wept again the loss of all those years.

II.

Two youths discoursing amid tears and laughter,
Poured out their trustful hearts unto each other:
They never met before, and never after,
Yet each remembered he had found a brother.

III.

A boy and girl amid the dawning light
Glanced at each other at a palace door;
That look was hope by day, and dreams by night,
And yet they never saw each other more.

IV.

Should gentle spirits born for one another
Meet only in sad death, the end of all?
Should hearts, that spring, like rivers, near each other,
As far apart into the Ocean fall?

V.

Should heavenly Beauty be a snare to stay
Free Love, and ere she hear his tongue complain,
Forsake him, as a lily turns away
From the air that cannot turn to it again?

VI.

Ah ! hapless Zephyr, thou canst never part
From the rare odour of the breathing bloom ;
Ah ! flower, thou canst not tell how fair thou art,
Or see thyself, or quaff thine own perfume.

VII.

Ah ! Lover unbeloved, or loving not
The doomèd heart that only turns to thee ;
In this wide world how cureless is thy lot ;
Who shall unwind the old perplexity ?

PART II.

I.

FOND hearts, not unrequited shall ye be
Forever—I beheld a happy sight,
Heaven opened, and a starry company
Far off, like Gods, and crowned Sons of Light.

II.

On beacon-towers, and citadels sublime
They stood, and watched with their unsleeping eyes
Where two or three, across the sea of Time,
Held on unto the shores of Paradise.

III.

All day they rocked upon the stormy Deep,
Till night beset them ; and they could not tell
The signal-lights—and they began to weep—
And the dark waters smote them, and they fell.

IV.

But oh! they woke in wonder! and behold
 A mighty City!—'twas a summer morn,
 And dazzling sunshine smote on walls of gold,
 And blessed voices on their ears forlorn.

V.

Soon as the gray prow touched upon the sands,
 Wild birds from fadeless woods, and inland streams,
 Showered o'er them those same notes of Faery lands,
 Which they had heard in far, forgotten dreams.

VI.

And on the morning breezes come and part
 Gushes of those enchanted melodies,
 Which for brief moments born within the heart
 Make sad the earth with echoes of the skies.

VII.

Odours from silent fields of Asphodel
 Breathe o'er them, steeping them in sudden bliss,
 That once had touched their sense, as with a spell,
 And made them yearn for parted lives in this.

VIII.

Visions, which some pale bard had seen afar
 Burn in the sunset, or the morning cloud,
 And then depart into the scornful air,
 Leaving his heart with earthly sorrows bowed.

IX.

From forth broad portals into daylight poured,
 While songs were pealed, and trumpets streamed above,
 And by those shores in triumph took their way,
 While he stood rapt in ecstasy and love.

X.

And men of sorrows, whose dejected eyes
Had sought the earth, and looked for Death in vain,
Lifted their heads unto the glorious skies,
And sighed with perfect bliss, unthralled of pain.

XI.

And they were borne into a vale of bowers,
And heard infantine voices, and those tones
Linked in their hearts with the rejoicing hours
Ere mortal anguish smit their weary bones.

XII.

Amid the tumult who are they that call
In well-known tongues sweet welcomes? Who are they
Amid the multitudes that throng the wall,
With well-known faces, now so young and gay?

XIII.

Who are the foremost on the shore to find,
And clasp those weary mariners, pale with woes?
Friends, lovers, tender children, parents kind,
Lost soon as loved—or loved too long to lose.

XIV.

They took those storm-beat mariners by the hand,
And through their worn and weary senses poured
Sweet snatches of old songs, and to the land
They led them, whispering many a tender word.

XV.

Up to the golden Citadel they fare,
And as they go their limbs grow full of might,
And One awaits them on the topmost stair—
One whom they had not seen, but knew at sight!

XVI.

Hark ! there is music, such as never flowed
 Through all the Ages—for the Lost are found—
 Sorrow is sitting by the throne of God—
 Justice and Mercy meet—and Love is crowned !

TO THE CICALA.

I.

BLITHEST Spirit of the Earth,
 Happy as incarnate Mirth,
 Minion, whom the Fairies feed,
 Who dost not toil, and canst not need,
 Thine odorous ark a forest bough ;
 While Summer laughs as fair as now
 I will not feast, or drink of wine,
 But live with thee, and joys like thine.

II.

Oh ! who may be as blithe and gay
 As thou, that singest night and day,
 Setting the light and shadows green
 A-flutter with thy pulses keen,
 And every viny glen and vale
 A-thrilling with thy long long tale,
 And river bank and star-lit shore
 With thy triumphs flooding o'er.

III.

When the wild Bee is at rest,
 When the Nightingale hath ceased,

Still I hear thee, reveller, still,
Over heath and over hill ;
Thou singest through the fire of noon,
Thou singest till the day be done,
Thou singest to the rising moon,
Thou singest up the unrisen sun.

IV.

Into the forest I will flee,
And be alone with Mirth and thee,
And wash the dust from Fancy's wings
With tears of Heaven, and virgin springs ;
Thou shalt lead me o'er the tops
Of thymy hills, down orchard slopes,
Past sun-lit dell, and moon-lit river,
Thou shalt lead me on forever !

V.

Lord of Summer, Forest-King,
Of the bright drops the breezes fling
Down upon the mossy lawn
In the dim sweet hours of dawn,
Clear as daylight, pure as Heaven,
Drops which the Midsummer Even
Weeps into pale cups silently,
I will take, and drink to thee !

VI.

Just as I raise it to my lip,
Plumèd Oberon shall dip
His sceptre in, and Puck shall dive
And I will swallow him alive ;

And on the vapour of that dew
 He shall rise, and wander through
 My brain, and make a sudden light,
 Like the first beam that scatters night.

VII.

Then shall I hear what songs they sing
 Under the fresh leaves in the Spring :
 And see what moon-lit feasts they hold
 Under a Lily's roof of gold ;
 And, when the midnight mists upcurl,
 Watch how they whisk, and how they whirl,
 And dance, and flash from earth to air,
 Bright and sudden as a star.

VIII.

They shall dance, and thou shalt sing ;
 But they shall slumber, Court, and King,
 They shall faint, ere thou be spent,
 And each shall seek his dewbell tent,
 And Titania's self shall tire
 And sleep beneath a wildrose brier,
 Ere thou be sad, ere thou be still,
 Piper of the thymy hill.

IX.

Of, at the first still flush of morn,
 The soft tones of some charmèd horn
 I shall hear, like sounds in sleep,
 Waft o'er the greenwood fresh and deep,
 From magic hold, where Giants thrall
 Beauty in some airy hall,

And a plumèd lover waits
To burst the spell before the gates.

X.

When the sun is hot and high,
I will rest where low winds sigh,
And dark leaves twine, and rilles creep,
And send me, with thy whir, asleep ;
And softly on some prisoned beam
Shall quiver down a noonday dream,
Wherein thy ceaseless note shall tingle.
And the sweet-toned waters mingle.

XI.

A dream of Faery, where a million
Of wingèd Elves a rare pavilion
Build for Love amid the green,
The fairest Summer-house e'er seen ;
While some their silver trowels ring,
Others opal blocks shall bring,
And with quaint laugh, and music fine,
Pile them in the sunny shine.

XII.

Monarch, thy great heart is more
Than treasures, if thou be poor ;
Though few the days that to thee fall,
They are long, and Summer's all ;
Minstrel, though thy life be brief,
Thou art happier than the chief
Of mortal Poets, for thy song
Is fed with rapture all day long.

XIII.

Thee, in thy fresh and leafy haunt,
 Nor Wealth can bribe, nor Penury daunt,
 Nor Glory puff, nor Envy tear,
 Thy drink the dew, thy food the air ;
 Oh ! could I share in thy delight,
 And dream in music day and night,
 Methinks I would be ev'n as thou,
 And sing beneath a forest bough.

XIV.

Nor Pain, nor Evil canst thou see,
 Thou fear'st not Death, though it must be,
 Therefore no Sorrow lights on thee,
 Or mingles with thy melody,
 From want thy jocund heart is free,
 Thou livest in triumphant glee,
 Thou diest, shouting jubilee !
 A God—save Immortality !

THE BLACKBIRD.

I.

HOW sweet the harmonies of Afternoon !
 The Blackbird sings along the sunny breeze
 His ancient song of leaves, and Summer boon ;
 Rich breath of hayfields streams through whispering trees ;
 And birds of morning trim their bustling wings,
 And listen fondly—while the Blackbird sings.



THE BLACKBIRD

II.

How soft the lovelight of the West reposes
On this green valley's cheery solitude,
On the trim cottage with its screen of roses,
On the gray belfry with its ivy hood,
And murmuring mill-race, and the wheel that flings
Its bubbling freshness—while the Blackbird sings.

III.

The very dial on the village church
Seems as 'twere dreaming in a dozy rest ;
The scribbled benches underneath the porch
Bask in the kindly welcome of the West ;
But the broad casements of the old Three Kings
Blaze like a furnace—while the Blackbird sings.

IV.

And there beneath the immemorial elm
Three rosy revellers round a table sit,
And through gray clouds give laws unto the realm,
Curse good and great, but worship their own wit,
And roar of fights, and fairs, and junketings,
Corn, colts, and curs—the while the Blackbird sings.

V.

Before her home, in her accustomed seat,
The tidy Grandam spins beneath the shade
Of the old honeysuckle, at her feet
The dreaming pug, and purring tabby laid ;
To her low chair a little maiden clings,
And spells in silence—while the Blackbird sings.

VI.

Sometimes the shadow of a lazy cloud
 Breathes o'er the hamlet with its gardens green,
 While the far fields, with sunlight overflowed,
 Like golden shores of Fairyland are seen ;
 Again, the sunshine on the shadow springs,
 And fires the thicket where the Blackbird sings.

VII.

The woods, the lawn, the peakèd Manor-house,
 With its peach-covered walls, and rookery loud,
 The trim, quaint garden alleys, screened with boughs,
 The lion-headed gates, so grim and proud,
 The mossy fountain with its murmurings,
 Lie in warm sunshine—while the Blackbird sings.

VIII.

The ring of silver voices, and the sheen
 Of festal garments—and my Lady streams
 With her gay court across the garden green ;
 Some laugh, and dance, some whisper their love dreams ;
 And one calls for a little page ; he strings
 Her lute beside her—while the Blackbird sings.

IX.

A little while—and lo ! the charm is heard,
 A youth, whose life has been all Summer, steals
 Forth from the noisy guests around the board,
 Creeps by her softly ; at her footstool kneels ;
 And, when she pauses, murmurs tender things
 Into her fond ear—while the Blackbird sings.

x.

The smoke-wreaths from the chimneys curl up higher,
And dizzy things of Eve begin to float
Upon the light ; the breeze begins to tire ;
Half way to Sunset with a drowsy note
The ancient clock from out the valley swings ;
The Grandam nods—and still the Blackbird sings.

xi.

Far shouts and laughter from the farmstead peal,
Where the great stack is piling in the sun ;
Through narrow gates o'erladen wagons reel,
And barking curs into the tumult run ;
While the inconstant wind bears off, and brings
The merry tempest—and the Blackbird sings.

xii.

On the high wold the last look of the sun
Burns, like a beacon, over dale and stream ;
The shouts have ceased, the laughter and the fun ;
The Grandam sleeps, and peaceful be her dream ;
Only a hammer on an anvil rings ;
The Day is dying—still the Blackbird sings.

xiii.

Now the good Vicar passes from his gate,
Serene, with long white hair ; and in his eye
Burns the clear spirit that hath conquered Fate,
And felt the wings of immortality ;
His heart is thronged with great imaginings,
And tender mercies—while the Blackbird sings.

xiv.

Down by the brook he bends his steps, and through
 A lowly wicket ; and at last he stands
 Awful beside the bed of one who grew
 From boyhood with him—who with lifted hands,
 And eyes, seems listening to far welcomings,
 And sweeter music than the Blackbird sings.

xv.

Two golden stars, like tokens from the Blest,
 Strike on his dim orbs from the setting Sun ;
 His sinking hands seem pointing to the West ;
 He smiles as though he said, “Thy will be done :”
 His eyes, they see not those illuminings ;
 His ears, they hear not what the Blackbird sings.

Charles Turner.

THE LION'S SKELETON.

HOW long, O lion, hast thou fleshless lain ?
 What rapt thy fierce and thirsty eyes away ?
 First came the vulture : worms, heat, wind, and rain
 Ensued, and ardours of the tropic day.
 I know not—if they spared it thee—how long
 The canker sate within thy monstrous mane,
 Till it fell piecemeal, and bestrewed the plain ;
 Or, shredded by the storming sands, was flung
 Again to earth ; but now thine ample front,
 Whereon the great frowns gathered, is laid bare ;

The thunders of thy throat, which erst were wont
 To scare the desert, are no longer there ;
 Thy claws remain, but worms, wind, rain, and hea'
 Have sifted out the substance of thy feet.

TO THE ROBIN.

THE ox is all as happy, in his stall,
 As when he lowed i' the summer's yellow eve
 Browsing the king-cup slopes ; but no reprieve
 Is left for thee, save thy sweet madrigal,
 Poor robin : and severer days will fall.
 Bethink thee well of all yon frosted sward,
 The orchard-path, so desolate and hard,
 And meadow-runnels, with no voice at all !
 Then feed with me, poor warbler, household bird,
 And glad me with thy song so sadly timed,
 And be on thankful ears thy lay conferred ;
 So, till her latest rhyme my muse hath rhymed,
 Thy voice shall with a pleasant thrill be heard,
 And with a poet's fear, when twigs are limed.

BIRD-NESTING.

AH ! that half bashful and half eager face !
 Among the trees thy guardian angel stands,
 With his heart beating, lest thy little hands
 Should come among the shadows and efface
 The stainless beauty of a life of love,
 And childhood innocence—for hark, the boys

Are peering through the hedgerows and the grove,
And ply their cruel sport with mirth and noise ;
But thou hast conquered ! and dispelled his fear ;
Sweet is the hope thy youthful pity brings—
And oft, methinks, if thou shalt shelter here
When these blue eggs are linnets' throats and wings,
A secret spell shall bring about the tree
The little birds that owed their life to thec.

THE LACHRYMATORY.

FROM out the grave of one whose budding years
Were cropped by death, when Rome was in her prime,
I brought the vial of his kinsman's tears,
There placed, as was the wont of ancient time ;
Round me, that night, in meads of asphodel,
'The souls of th' early dead did come and go,
Drawn by that flask of grief, as by a spell,
That long-imprisoned shower of human woe ;
As round Ulysses, for the draught of blood,
The heroes thronged, those spirits flocked to me,
Where, lonely, with that charm of tears, I stood ;
Two, most of all, my dreaming eyes did see ;
The young Marcellus, young, but great and good,
And Tully's daughter, mourned so tenderly.

THE BUOY-BELL.

HOW like the leper, with his own sad cry
Enforcing his own solitude, it tolls !

That lonely bell set in the rushing shoals,
To warn us from the place of jeopardy !
O friend of man ! sore-vexed by ocean's power,
The changing tides wash o'er thee day by day ;
Thy trembling mouth is filled with bitter spray,
Yet still thou ringest on from hour to hour ;
High is thy mission, though thy lot is wild—
To be in danger's realm a guardian sound ;
In seamen's dreams a pleasant part to bear,
And earn their blessing as the year goes round ;
And strike the key-note of each grateful prayer,
Breathed in their distant homes by wife or child !

ON THE STATUE OF LORD BYRON,

BY THORWALDSEN, IN TRINITY COLLEGE LIBRARY, CAMBRIDGE

TIS strange that I, who haply might have met
Thy living self—who sought to hide the flaws
In thy great fame, and, though I ne'er had set
Eyes on thee, heard thee singing without pause,
And longed to see thee, should, alas ! detect
The Thyrza-sorrow first on sculptured brows,
And know thee best in marble ! Fate allows
But this poor intercourse ; high and erect
Thou hold'st thy head, whose forward glance beholds
All forms that throng this learned vestibule ;
Women and men, and boys and girls from school,
Who gaze with admiration all unchecked
On thy proud lips, and garment's moveless folds,
So still, so calm, so purely beautiful !

THE SAME—(CONTINUED.)

AND near thee hangs a page, in boyhood penned,
When all thy thoughts were, like thy marble, pure ;
When thou hadst none but little faults to mend,
In Lochnagar's cool shadow still secure
From praise or slander ; but thy brilliant youth
And manhood soon took tribute of thy kind ;
Great artists then thy lineaments designed,
And, last, the Dane's fine chisel struck the truth ;
And, when the current of the breath of fame
Drew up all relics of the master's craft,
This little page,—we know not whence it came,—
Ran flitting forward in the mighty draught,
And, placed at last, where it was fain to be,
Shares our fond gaze between itself and thee.

THE CHARMING OF THE EAST WIND.

LATE in the month a rough east wind had sway,
The old trees thundered, and the dust was blown ;
But other powers possessed the night and day,
And soon he found he could not hold his own ;
The merry ruddock whistled at his heart,
And strenuous blackbirds pierced his flanks with song,
Pert sparrows wrangled o'er his every part,
And through him shot the larks on pinions strong :
Anon a sunbeam broke across the plain,
And the wild bee went forth on booming wing—
Whereat he feeble waxed, but rose again
With aimless rage, and idle blustering ;

The south wind touched him with a drift of rain,
And down he sank, a captive to the spring !

THE FOREST GLADE.

AS one dark morn I trod a forest glade,
A sunbeam entered at the further end,
And ran to meet me through the yielding shade—
As one, who in the distance sees a friend,
And, smiling, hurries to him ; but mine eyes,
Bewildered by the change from dark to bright,
Received the greeting with a quick surprise
At first, and then with tears of pure delight ;
For sad my thoughts had been—the tempest's wrath
Had gloomed the night, and made the morrow gray ;
That heavenly guidance humble sorrow hath,
Had turned my feet into that forest-way,
Just when His morning light came down the path,
Among the lonely woods at early day.

MORNING.

IT is the fairest sight in Nature's realms,
To see on summer morning, dewy-sweet,
That very type of freshness, the green wheat,
Surging through shadows of the hedgerow elms ;
How the eye revels in the many shapes
And colours which the risen day restores !
How the wind blows the poppy's scarlet capes
About his urn ! and how the lark upsoars !

Not like the timid corn-craik scudding fast
From his own voice, he with him takes his song
Heavenward, then, striking sideways, shoots along,
Happy as sailor-boy that, from the mast,
Runs out upon the yard-arm, till at last
He sinks into his nest, those clover tufts among.

HARVEST-HOME.

I N September came our corn-crops home,
Late, but full-eared—by many a merry noise
Of matron and of maid, young girls and boys,
Preceded, flanked, and followed, did they come ;
A general joy ! for piles of unwrought food
For man and beast, on those broad axles pressed,
And strained those sinewy necks in garlands dressed ;
The harebell and the ragwort wondering stood
As the slow teams wound up that grassy lane ;
All knew the husbandman's long task was done ;
While, as they crossed his disk, the setting sun
Blazed momently betwixt each rolling wain
And that which followed, piled with golden grain,
As if to gratulate the harvest won.

TIME AND TWILIGHT.

IN the dark twilight of an autumn morn
I stood within a little country-town,
Wherefrom a long acquainted path went down
To the dear village haunts where I was born ;

The low of oxen on the rainy wind,
 Death and the Past, came up the well-known road,
 And bathed my heart with tears, but stirred my mind
 To tread once more the track so long untrod ;
 But I was warned, “ Regrets which are not thrust
 Upon thee, seek not ; for this sobbing breeze
 Will but unman thee ; thou art bold to trust
 Thy woe-worn thoughts among these roaring trees,
 And gleams of bygone playgrounds—Is’t no crime
 To rush by night into the arms of Time ?”

Coventry Patmore.

HONORIA.

I.

RESTLESS and sick of long exile
 From those sweet friends, I rode to see
 The church-repairs ; and, after a while,
 Waylaying the Dean, was asked to tea.
 They introduced the cousin Fred
 I’d heard of, Honour’s favourite ; grave,
 Dark, handsome, bluff, but gently bred,
 And with an air of the salt wave.
 He stared, and gave his hand, and I
 Stared too : then donned we smiles, the shrouds
 Of ire, best hid while she was by,
 A sweet moon ’twixt her lighted clouds.

II.

Whether this Cousin was the cause
 I know not, but I seemed to see,

The first time then, how fair she was,
How much the fairest of the three.
Each stopped to let the other go ;
But he, being time-bound, rose the first.
Stayed he in Sarum long ? If so,
I hoped to see him at the Hurst.
No : he had called here on his way
To Portsmouth, where the Arrogant,
His ship, was ; and should leave next day,
For two years' cruise in the Levant.
I watched her face, suspecting germs
Of love : her farewell showed me plain
She loved, on the majestic terms
That she should not be loved again.
And so her cousin, parting, felt,
For all his rough sea face grew red.
Compassion did my malice melt :
Then went I home to a restless bed.
I, who admired her too, could see
His infinite remorse at this
Great mystery, that she should be
So beautiful, yet not be his,
And, pitying, longed to plead his part ;
But scarce could tell, so strange my whim,
Whether the weight upon my heart
Was sorrow for myself or him.

III.

She was all mildness ; yet 'twas writ
Upon her beauty legibly,
“ He that's for heaven itself unfit,
“ Let him not hope to merit me.”

And such a challenge, quite apart
 From thoughts of love, humbled, and thus
 To sweet repentance moved my heart,
 And made me more magnanimous,
 And led me to review my life,
 Inquiring where in aught the least,
 If question were of her for wife,
 Ill might be mended, hope increased :
 Not that I soared so far above
 Myself, as this great hope to dare :
 And yet I half foresaw that love
 Might hope where reason would despair.

IV.

As drowsiness my brain relieved,
 A shrill defiance of all to arms,
 Shrieked by the stable-cock, received
 An angry answer from three farms.
 And, first, I dreamt that I, her knight,
 A clarion's haughty pathos heard,
 And rode securely to the fight,
 Cased in the scarf she had conferred ;
 And there, the bristling lists behind,
 Saw many, and vanquished all I saw
 Of her unnumbered cousin-kind,
 In Navy, Army, Church, and Law ;
 Then warriors, stern and Norman-nosed,
 Seemed Sarum choristers, whose song,
 Mixed with celestial grief, disclosed
 More joy than memory can prolong ;
 And phantasms as absurd and sweet
 Merged each in each, in endless chase,

And everywhere I seemed to meet
The haunting fairness of her face.

THE CHASE.

I.

SHE wearies with an ill unknown;
In sleep she sobs and seems to float,
A water-lily, all alone
Within a lonely castle-moat;
And as the full-moon, spectral, lies
Within the crescent's gleaming arms,
The present shows her heedless eyes
A future dim with vague alarms:
She sees, and yet she scarcely sees;
For, life-in-life not yet begun,
Too many are life's mysteries
For thought to fix 'tward any one.

II.

She's told that maidens are by youths
Extremely honoured and desired;
And sighs, "If those sweet tales be truths,
What bliss to be so much admired!"
The suitors come; she sees them grieve:
Her coldness fills them with despair:
She'd pity if she could believe:
She's sorry that she cannot care.

III.

Who's this that meets her on her way?
Comes he as enemy, or friend;

Or both ? Her bosom seems to say
He cannot pass, and there an end.
Whom does he love ? Does he confer
His heart on worth that answers his ?
Perhaps he's come to worship her :
She fears, she hopes, she thinks he is.

IV.

Advancing stepless, quick, and still,
As in the grass a serpent glides,
He fascinates her fluttering will,
Then terrifies with dreadful strides :
At first, there's nothing to resist :
He fights with all the forms of peace ;
He comes about her like a mist,
With subtle, swift, unseen increase ;
And then, unlooked for, strikes amain
Some stroke that frightens her to death
And grows all harmlessness again,
Ere she can cry, or get her breath.
At times she stops, and stands at bay ;
But he, in all more strong than she,
Subdues her with his pale dismay,
Or more admired audacity.

V.

All people speak of him with praise :
How wise his talk ; how sweet his tone ;
What manly worship in his gaze !
It nearly makes her heart his own.
With what an air he speaks her name :
His manner always recollects

Her sex : and still the woman's claim
 Is taught its scope by his respects.
 Her charms, perceived to prosper first
 In his beloved advertencies,
 When in her glass they are rehearsed,
 Prove his most powerful allies.

VI.

Ah, whither shall a maiden flee,
 When a bold youth so swift pursues,
 And siege of tenderest courtesy,
 With hope perseverant, still renews !
 Why fly so fast ? Her flattered breast
 Thanks him who finds her fair and good ;
 She loves her fears ; veiled joys arrest
 The foolish terrors of her blood :
 By secret, sweet degrees, her heart,
 Vanquished, takes warmth from his desire :
 She makes it more, with bashful art,
 And fuels love's late dreaded fire.

VII.

The gallant credit he accords
 To all the signs of good in her,
 Redeems itself ; his praiseful words
 What they attribute still confer.
 Her heart is thrice as rich in bliss,
 She's three times gentler than before :
 He gains a right to call her his,
 Now she through him is so much more !
 Ah, might he, when by doubts aggrieved,
 Behold his tokens next her breast,

At all his words and sighs perceived
Against its blithe upheaval pressed.
But still she flies: should she be won,
It must not be believed or thought
She yields: she's chased to death, undone,
Surprised, and violently caught.

FROST IN HARVEST.

THE lover who, across a gulf
Of ceremony, views his Love,
And dares not yet address herself,
Pays worship to her stolen glove.
The gulf o'erleaped, the lover wed,
It happens oft (let truth be told),
The halo leaves the sacred head,
Respect grows lax, and worship cold,
And all love's May-day promising,
Like song of birds before they pair,
Or flush of flowers in boastful Spring,
Dies out, and leaves the Summer bare.
Yet should a man, it seems to me,
Honour what honourable is,
For some more honourable plea
Than only that it is not his.
The gentle wife, who decks his board
And makes his day to have no night,
Whose wishes wait upon her Lord,
Who finds her own in his delight,
Is she another now than she
Who, mistress of her maiden charms,

At his wild prayer, incredibly
Committed them to his proud arms ?
Unless her choice of him's a slur
Which makes her proper credit dim,
He never enough can honour her
Who past all speech has honoured him.

REJECTED.

“ **P**ERHAPS she's dancing somewhere now !”
The thoughts of light and music wake
Sharp jealousies, that grow and grow
Till silence and the darkness ache.
He sees her step, so proud and gay,
Which, ere he spake, foretold despair ;
Thus did she look, on such a day,
And such the fashion of her hair ;
And thus she stood, when, stooping low,
He took the bramble from her dress,
And thus she laughed and talked, whose “ No ”
Was sweeter than another's “ Yes.”
He feeds on thoughts that most deject ;
He impudently feigns her charms,
So reverenced in his own respect,
Clasped dreadfully by other arms ;
And turns, and puts his brows, that ache,
Against the pillow where 'tis cold :
If only now his heart would break !
But, oh, how much a heart can hold !

THE MISTRESS.

IF he's capricious, she'll be so,
But, if his duties constant are,
She lets her loving favour glow
As steady as a tropic star.
Appears there naught for which to weep,
She'll weep for naught, for his dear sake ;
She clasps her sister in her sleep ;
Her love in dreams is most awake.
Her soul, that once with pleasure shook,
Did any eyes her beauty own,
Now wonders how they dare to look
On what belongs to him alone ;
The indignity of taking gifts
Exhilarates her loving breast ;
A rapture of submission lifts
Her life into celestial rest ;
There's nothing left of what she was ;
Back to the babe the woman dies ;
And all the wisdom that she has
Is to love him for being wise.
She's confident because she fears ;
And, though discreet when he's away,
If none but her dear despot hears,
She'll prattle like a child at play.
Perchance, when all her praise is said,
He tells the news, a battle won,
On either side ten thousand dead,
Describing how the whole was done :
She thinks, " He's looking on my face !
" I am his joy ; whate'er I do,

“ He sees such time-contenting grace.
 “ In that, he’d have me always so ! ”
 And, evermore, for either’s sake,
 To the sweet folly of the dove,
 She joins the cunning of the snake,
 To rivet and exalt his love.
 Her mode of candour is deceit ;
 And what she thinks from what she’ll say,
 Although I’ll never call her cheat,
 Lies far as Scotland from Cathay.
 Without his knowledge he was won ;
 Against his nature kept devout ;
 She’ll never tell him how ’twas done,
 And he will never find it out.
 If, sudden, he suspects her wiles,
 And hears her forging chain and trap,
 And looks, she sits in simple smiles,
 Her two hands lying in her lap.
 Her secret (privilege of the Bard,
 Whose fancy is of either sex),
 Is mine ; but let the darkness guard
 Mysteries that light would more perplex.

THE WIFE’S TRAGEDY.

MAN must be pleased ; but him to please
 Is woman’s pleasure : down the gulf
 Of his condoled necessities
 She casts her best, she flings herself :
 How often flings for naught ! and yokes
 Her heart to an icicle or whim

Whose each impatient word provokes
Another, not from her, but him ;
While she, too gentle even to force
His penitence by kind replies,
Waits by, expecting his remorse,
With pardon in her pitying eyes :
And if he at last, by shame oppressed,
A comfortable word confers,
She leans and weeps against his breast,
And seems to think the sin was hers :
And while his love has any life,
Or any eye to see her charms,
At any time, she's still his wife,
Dearly devoted to his arms.
She loves with love that cannot tire ;
And if, ah woe, she loves alone,
Through passionate duty love flames higher
As grass grows taller round a stone.

THE PARADOX.

HOW strange a thing a Lover seems
To animals that do not love !
Look where he walks and talks in dreams,
And flouts us with his Lady's glove :
How foreign is the garb he wears ;
And how his great devotion mocks
Our poor propriety, and scares
The undevout with paradox !
His soul, through scorn of worldly care,
And great extremes of sweet and gall,

And musing much on all that's fair,
Grows witty and fantastical :
He sobs his joy and sings his grief,
And evermore finds such delight
In simply picturing his relief,
That 'plaining seems to cure his plight :
He makes his sorrow, when there's none ;
His fancy blows both cold and hot ;
Next to the wish that she'll be won,
His first hope is that she may not ;
He sues, yet deprecates consent ;
Would she be captured she must fly ,
She looks too happy and content,
For whose least pleasure he would die;
Oh, cruelty, she cannot care
For one to whom she's always kind !
He says he's naught, but oh, despair,
If he's not Jove to her fond mind !
He's jealous if she pets a dove,
She must be his with all her soul ;
Yet 'tis a postulate in love
That part is greater than the whole,
And all his apprehension's stress,
When he's with her, regards her hair,
Her hand, a ribbon of her dress,
As if his life were only there :
Because she's constant, he will change,
And kindest glances coldly meet,
And, all the time he seems so strange,
His soul is fawning at her feet :
Of smiles and simple heaven grown tired
He wickedly provokes her tears,

And when she weeps, as he desired,
Falls slain with ecstasies of fears ;
He finds, although she has no fault,
Except the folly to be his ;
He worships her, the more to exalt
The profanation of a kiss ;
Health's his disease ; he's never well
But when his paleness shames her rose ;
His faith's a rock-built citadel,
Its sign a flag that each way blows ;
His o'erfed fancy frets and fumes ;
And Love, in him, is fierce like Hate,
And ruffles his ambrosial plumes
Against the bars of Time and Fate.

NIGHT THOUGHTS.

TIS sweeter than all else below,
The daylight and its duties done,
To fold the arms for rest, and so
Relinquish all regards but one ;
To see her features in the dark ;
To lie and meditate, once more,
Some grace he did not fully mark,
Some tone he had not heard before ;
Then from beneath his head to take
Her notes, her picture, and her glove,
Put there for joy when he shall wake,
And press them to the heart of love ;
And then to whisper "Wife," and pray
To live so long as not to miss

That unimaginable day
Which farther seems the nearer 'tis ;
And still from joy's unfathomed well
To drink, in sleep, while, on her brow
Of innocence ineffable,
The laughing bridal roses blow.

BY THE SEA.

I.

I, WHILE the shop-girl fitted on
The sand-shoes, looked where, down the bay,
The sea glowed with a shrouded sun.
"I'm ready, Felix; will you pay?"
That was my first expense for this
Sweet stranger whom I called my Wife :
How light the touches are that kiss
The music from the chords of life !

II.

Her feet, by half a mile of sea,
In spotless sand, left shapely prints ;
Then, from the beach, she loaded me
With agate-stones, which turned out flints ;
And, after that, we took a boat :
She wished to see the ships-of-war,
At anchor, each a lazy mote
Dotting the brilliance, miles from shore.

III.

A vigorous breeze the canvas filled,
Lifting us o'er the bright-ridged gulf,

And every lurch my darling thrilled
With light fear smiling at itself:
And, dashing past the Arrogant,
Asleep upon the restless wave
After its cruise in the Levant,
We reached the Wolf; and signal gave
For help to board: with caution meet,
My bride was placed within the chair,
The red-flag wrapped about her feet,
And so swung laughing through the air

IV.

“Look, Love,” she said, “there’s Frederick Graham,
“My Cousin, whom you met, you know.”
And, seeing us, the brave man came,
And made his frank and courteous bow,
And gave my hand a sailor’s shake,
And said, “You asked me to the Hurst:
“I never thought my luck would make
“You and your wife my guests the first.”
And Honour, cruel, “Nor did we:
“Have you not lately changed your ship?”
“Yes: I’m Commander, now,” said he,
With a slight quiver of the lip.
We saw the vessel, shown with pride;
Took luncheon; I must eat his salt!
Parting he said (I think my bride
Found him unselfish to a fault),
His wish he saw had come to pass
(And so, indeed, her face expressed),
That that should be, whate’er it was,
Which made his Cousin happiest.

We left him looking from above,
 Rich bankrupt ! for he could afford
 To say most proudly that his love
 Was virtue and its own reward.
 But others loved as well as he
 (Thought I, half-angered), and, if fate,
 Unfair, had only fashioned me
 As hapless, I had been as great.

v.

As souls, ambitious, but low-born,
 If greatly raised by luck or wit,
 All pride of place will proudly scorn,
 And live as they'd been used to it,
 So we two wore our strange estate :
 Familiar, unaffected, free,
 We talked, until the dusk grew late,
 Of this and that ; but, after tea,
 As doubtful if a lot so sweet
 As ours was ours in very sooth,
 Like children, to promote conceit,
 We feigned that it was not the truth ;
 And she assumed the maiden coy,
 And I adored remorseless charms,
 And then we clapped our hands for joy,
 And ran into each other's arms.

WOMANHOOD.

BE man's hard virtues highly wrought,
 But let my gentle Mistress be,
 In every look, word, deed, and thought,
 Nothing but sweet and womanly !



WOMANHOOD.

Her virtues please my virtuous mood,
 But what at all times I admire
 Is, not that she is wise or good,
 But just the thing which I desire.
 With versatility to bring
 Her mental tone to any strain,
 If oft'nest she is any thing,
 Be it thoughtless, talkative, and vain.
 That seems in her supremest grace
 Which, virtue or not, apprises me
 That my familiar arms embrace
 Unfathomable mystery.

Arthur Hugh Clough.

QUA CURSUM VENTUS.

AS ships, becalmed at eve, that lay
 With canvas drooping, side by side,
 Two towers of sail at dawn of day
 Are scarce, long leagues apart, descried ;

 When fell the night, upsprung the breeze,
 And all the darkling hours they plied,
 Nor dreamt but each the self-same seas
 By each was cleaving, side by side :

 E'en so—but why the tale reveal
 Of those whom, year by year unchanged,
 Brief absence joined anew to feel,
 Astounded, soul from soul estranged ?

At dead of night their sails were filled,
 And onward each rejoicing steered :—
 Ah, neither blame, for neither willed,
 Or wist, what first with dawn appeared !

To veer, how vain ! On, onward strain,
 Brave barks ! In light, in darkness too,
 Through winds and tides one compass guides,—
 To that, and your own selves, be true.

But O blithe breeze, and O great seas,
 Though ne'er, that earliest parting past,
 On your wide plain they join again,
 Together lead them home at last !

One port, methought, alike they sought,
 One purpose hold where'er they fare,—
 O bounding breeze, O rushing seas,
 At last, at last, unite them there !

THE SONG OF LAMECH.

HEARKEN to me, ye mothers of my tent :
 Ye wives of Lamech, hearken to my speech :
 Adah, let Jubal hither lead his goats ;
 And Tubal Cain, O Zillah, hush the forge ;
 Naamah her wheel shall ply beside, and thou,
 My Jubal, touch, before I speak, the string.
 Yea, Jubal, touch, before I speak, the string.
 Hear ye my voice, beloved of my tent,
 Dear ones of Lamech, listen to my speech.

For Eve made answer, “ Cain, my son, my own,
 O, if I cursed thee, O my child, I sinned,

And He that heard me, heard, and said me nay :
My first, my only one, thou shalt not go.”
And Adam answered also, “ Cain, my son,
He that is gone forgiveth, we forgive :
Rob not thy mother of two sons at once ;
My child, abide with us and comfort us.”

Hear ye my voice ; Adah and Zillah, hear ;
Ye wives of Lamech, listen to my speech.

For Cain replied not. But, an hour more, sat
Where the night through he sat ; his knit brows seen,
Scarce seen, amid the foldings of his limbs.
But when the sun was bright upon the field,
To Adam still, and Eve still waiting by,
And weeping, lift he up his voice and spake.
Cain said, “ The sun is risen upon the earth ;
The day demands my going, and I go.—
As you from Paradise, so I from you :
As you to exile, into exile I :
My father and my mother, I depart.
As betwixt you and Paradise of old,
So betwixt me, my parents, now, and you,
Cherubim I discern, and in their hand
A flaming sword that turneth every way,
To keep the way of my one tree of life,
The way my spirit yearns to, of my love.
Yet not, O Adam and O Eve, fear not.
For He that asked me, Where is Abel ? He
Who called me cursed from the earth, and said,
A fugitive and vagabond thou art,
He also said, when fear had slain my soul,
There shall not touch thee man nor beast. Fear not.

Lo, I have spoke with God, and He hath said,
Fear not;—and let me go as He hath said.”
Cain also said (O Jubal, touch thy string),—
“ Moreover, in the darkness of my mind,
When the night’s night of misery was most black,
A little star came twinkling up within,
And in myself I had a guide that led
And in myself had knowledge of a soul.
Fear not, O Adam and O Eve: I go.”

Children of Lamech, listen to my speech.

For when the years were multiplied, and Cain
Eastward of Eden, in this land of Nod,
Had sons, and sons of sons, and sons of them,
Enoch and Irad and Mehujael
(My father, and my children’s grandsire he),
It came to pass that Cain, who dwelt alone,
Met Adam, at the nightfall, in the field:
Who fell upon his neck, and wept, and said,
“ My son, has God not spoken to thee, Cain ?”
And Cain replied, when weeping loosed his voice,
“ My dreams are double, O my father, good
And evil;—terror to my soul by night,
And agony by day, when Abel stands
A dead, black shade, and speaks not, neither looks,
Nor makes me any answer when I cry,
Curse me, but let me know thou art alive !
But comfort also, like a whisper, comes,
In visions of a deeper sleep, when he,
Abel, as him we knew, yours once and mine,
Comes with a free forgiveness in his face,
Seeming to speak, solicitous for words,

And wearing ere he goes the old, first look
Of unsuspecting, unforeboding love.
Three nights are gone I saw him thus, my sire."

Dear ones of Lamech, listen to my speech.

For Adam said, "Three nights ago to me
Came Abel, in my sleep, as thou hast said,
And spake and bade,—Arise, my father, go
Where in the land of exile dwells thy son ;
Say to my brother, Abel bids thee come,
Abel would have thee ; and lay thou thy hand,
My father, on his head, that he may come ;
Am I not weary, father, for this hour ?"

Hear ye my voice, Adah and Zillah, hear,
Children of Lamech, listen to my speech :
And, son of Zillah, sound thy solemn string.

For Adam laid upon the head of Cain
His hand, and Cain bowed down, and slept, and died.
And a deep sleep on Adam also fell,
And, in his slumber's deepest, he beheld,
Standing before the gate of Paradise,
With Abel, hand in hand, our father Cain.

Hear ye my voice, Adah and Zillah, hear ;
Ye wives of Lamech, listen to my speech.

Though to his wounding he did slay a man,
Yea, and a young man to his hurt he slew,
Fear not ye wives, nor sons of Lamech fear :
If unto Cain was safety given and rest,
Shall Lamech surely and his people die ?

THE NEW SINAI.

LO, here is God, and there is God !
Believe it not, O man !

In such vain sort to this and that
The ancient heathen ran ;
Though old Religion shake her head,
And say, in bitter grief,
The day behold, at first foretold,
Of atheist unbelief :
Take better part, with manly heart,
Thine adult spirit can ;
Receive it not, believe it not,
Believe it not, O Man !

As men at dead of night awaked
With cries, "The king is here,"
Rush forth and greet whome'er they meet,
Whoe'er shall first appear ;
And still repeat, to all the street,
" 'Tis he,—the king is here ;"
The long procession moveth on,
Each nobler form they see,
With changeful suit they still salute,
And cry, " 'Tis he, 'tis he !"

So, even so, when men were young,
And earth and heaven was new,
And His immediate presence He
From human hearts withdrew,
The soul perplexed and daily vexed
With sensuous False and True,

Amazed, bereaved, no less believed,
And fain would see Him too :
He is !” the prophet-tongues proclaimed ;
In joy and hasty fear,
‘ He is !” aloud replied the crowd,
“ Is, here, and here, and here.”

“ He is ! They are !” in distance seen
On yon Olympus high,
In those Avernian woods abide,
And walk this azure sky :
“ They are ! They are !” to every show
Its eyes the baby turned,
And blazes sacrificial, tall,
On thousand altars burned :
“ They are ! They are !”—On Sinai’s top
Far seen the lightnings shone,
The thunder broke, a trumpet spoke,
And God said, “ I am One.”

God spake it out, “ I, God, am One ;”
The unheeding ages ran,
And baby-thoughts again, again,
Have dogged the growing man :
And as of old from Sinai’s top
God said that God is One,
By Science strict so speaks He now
To tell us, There is None !
Earth goes by chemic forces ; Heaven’s
A Mécanique Céleste !
And heart and mind of human kind
A watch-work as the rest !

Is this a Voice, as was the Voice
Whose speaking told abroad,
When thunder pealed, and mountain reeled,
The ancient Truth of God ?
Ah, not the Voice ; 'tis but the cloud,
The outer darkness dense,
Where image none, nor e'er was seen
Similitude of sense.
'Tis but the cloudy darkness dense,
That wrapt the Mount around ;
While in amaze the people stays,
To hear the Coming Sound.

Some chosen prophet-soul the while
Shall dare, sublimely meek,
Within the shroud of blackest cloud
The Deity to seek :
Mid atheistic systems dark,
And darker hearts' despair,
That soul has heard perchance His word,
And on the dusky air,
His skirts, as passed He by, to see
Hath strained on their behalf,
Who on the plain, with dance amain,
Adore the Golden Calf.

'Tis but the cloudy darkness dense ;
Though blank the tale it tells,
No God, no Truth ! yet He, in sooth,
Is there,—within it dwells ;
Within the sceptic darkness deep
He dwells that none may see,

Till idol forms and idol thoughts
 Have passed and ceased to be :
 No God, no Truth ! ah though, in sooth,
 So stand the doctrine's half ;
 On Egypt's track return not back,
 Nor own the Golden Calf.

Take better part, with manlier heart,
 Thine adult spirit can :
 No God, no Truth, receive it ne'er—
 Believe it ne'er—O Man !
 But turn not then to seek again
 What first the ill began ;
 No God, it saith ; ah, wait in faith
 God's self-completing plan ;
 Receive it not, but leave it not,
 And wait it out, O man !

The Man that went the cloud within
 Is gone and vanished quite ;
 "He cometh not," the people cries,
 "Nor bringeth God to sight :"
 "Lo these thy gods, that safety give,
 Adore and keep the feast!"
 Deluding and deluded cries
 The Prophet's brother-Priest :
 And Israel all bows down to fall
 Before the gilded beast.

Devout, indeed ! that priestly creed.
 O Man, reject as sin !
 The clouded hill attend thou still,
 And him that went within.

He yet shall bring some worthy thing
For waiting souls to see ;
Some sacred word that he hath heard
Their light and life shall be ;
Some lofty part, than which the heart
Adopt no nobler can,
Thou shalt receive, thou shalt believe,
And thou shalt do, O Man !

“ACROSS THE SEA.”

ACROSS the sea, along the shore,
In numbers more and ever more,
From lonely hut and busy town,
The valley through, the mountain down,
What was it ye went out to see,
Ye silly folk of Galilee ?
The reed that in the wind doth shake ?
The weed that washes in the lake ?
The reeds that waver, the weeds that float :—
A young man preaching in a boat.

What was it ye went out to hear,
By sea and land, from far and near ?
A teacher ? Rather seek the feet
Of those who sit in Moses' seat ;
Go humbly seek, and bow to them,
Far off in great Jerusalem.
From them that in her courts ye saw,
Her perfect doctors of the law,
What is it came ye here to note ?—
A young man preaching in a boat.

A prophet ! Boys and women weak !
 Declare, or cease to rave,
 Whence is it he hath learned to speak ?
 Say who his doctrine gave ?
 A prophet ? Prophet wherefore he
 Of all in Israel tribes ?—
He teacheth with authority,
 And not as do the Scribes.

J A C O B.

MY sons, and ye the children of my sons,
 Jacob your father goes upon his way,
 His pilgrimage is being accomplished.
 Come near and hear him ere his words are o'er.
 Not as my father's or his father's days,
 As Isaac's days or Abraham's have been mine ;
 Not as the days of those that in the field
 Walked at the eventide to meditate,
 And haply, to the tent returning, found
 Angels at nightfall waiting at their door ;
 They communed, Israel wrestled with the Lord.
 No, not as Abraham's or as Isaac's days,
 My sons, have been Jacob your father's days,—
 Evil and few, attaining not to theirs
 In number, and in worth inferior much.
 As a man with his friend walked they with God,
 In His abiding presence they abode,
 And all their acts were open to His face.
 But I have had to force mine eyes away,
 To lose, almost to shun, the thoughts I loved.

To bend down to the work, to bare the breast,
And struggle, feet and hands, with enemies ;
To buffet and to battle with hard men,
With men of selfishness and violence ;
To watch by day, and calculate by night,
To plot and think of plots, and through a land
Ambushed with guile, and with strong foes beset,
To win with art safe wisdom's peaceful way.

Alas ! I know, and from the onset knew,
The first-born faith, the singleness of soul,
The antique pure simplicity with which
God and good angels communed undispleased,
Is not ; it shall not any more be said,
That of a blameless and a holy kind,
The chosen race, the seed of promise, comes.

The royal, high prerogatives, the dower
Of innocence and perfectness of life,
Pass not unto my children from their sire,
As unto me they came of mine ; they fit
Neither to Jacob nor to Jacob's race.

Think ye, my sons, in this extreme old age
And in this failing breath, that I forget
How on the day when from my father's door,
In bitterness and ruefulness of heart,
I from my parents set my face, and felt
I never more again should look on theirs,—
How on that day I seemed unto myself
Another Adam from his home cast out,
And driven abroad unto a barren land
Cursed for his sake, and mocking still with thorns
And briers that labour and that sweat of brow
He still must spend to live ? Sick of my days,

I wished not life, but cried out, Let me die ;
But at Luz God came to me ; in my heart
He put a better mind, and showed me how,
While we discern it not, and least believe,
On stairs invisible betwixt His heaven
And our unholy, sinful, toilsome earth
Celestial messengers of loftiest good
Upward and downward pass continually.
Many, since I upon the field of Luz
Set up the stone I slept on unto God,
Many have been the troubles of my life ;
Sins in the field and sorrows in the tent,
In mine own household anguish and despair,
And gall and wormwood mingled with my love.
The time would fail me should I seek to tell
Of a child wronged and cruelly revenged
(Accursed was that anger, it was fierce,
That wrath, for it was cruel) ; or of strife
And jealousy and cowardice, with lies
Mocking a father's misery ; deeds of blood,
Pollutions, sicknesses, and sudden deaths.
These many things against me many times,
The ploughers have ploughed deep upon my back,
And made deep furrows ; blessed be His name
Who hath delivered Jacob out of all,
And left within his spirit hope of good.

Come near to me, my sons : your father goes ;
The hour of his departure draweth nigh.
Ah me ! this eager rivalry of life,
This cruel conflict for pre-eminence,
This keen supplanting of the dearest kin.

Quick seizure and fast unrelaxing hold
 Of vantage-place,—the stony hard resolve,
 The chase, the competition, and the craft
 Which seems to be the poison of our life,
 And yet is the condition of our life !
 To have done things on which the eye with shame
 Looks back, the closed hand clutching still the prize !
 Alas ! what of all these things shall I say ?
 Take me away unto thy sleep, O God !
 I thank thee it is over, yet I think
 It was a work appointed me of thee.
 How is it ? I have striven all my days
 To do my duty to my house and hearth,
 And to the purpose of my father's race,
 Yet is my heart therewith not satisfied.

“O STREAM DESCENDING.”

O STREAM descending to the sea,
 Thy mossy banks between
 The flow'rets blow, the grasses grow,
 The leafy trees are green.

In garden-plots the children play,
 The fields the labourers till,
 And houses stand on either hand,
 And thou descendest still.

O life descending into death,
 Our waking eyes behold
 Parent and friend thy lapse attend,
 Companions young and old.

Strong purposes our mind possess,
Our hearts affections fill ;
We toil and earn, we seek and learn,
And thou descendest still.

O end to which our currents tend,
Inevitable sea
To which we flow, what do we know,
What shall we guess of thee ?

A roar we hear upon thy shore,
As we our course fulfil ;
Scarce we divine a sun will shine
And be above us still.

Charles Kingsley.

A N D R O M E D A.

OVER the sea, past Crete, on the Syrian shore to the southward,
Dwells in the well-tilled lowland a dark-haired \mathbb{A} ethiop people,
Skilful with needle and loom, and the arts of the dyer and carver,
Skilful, but feeble of heart ; for they know not the lords of Olympus,
Lovers of men ; neither broad-browed Zeus, nor Pallas Athené,
Teacher of wisdom to heroes, bestower of might in the battle ;

Share not the cunning of Hermes, nor list to the songs of
Apollo.

Fearing the stars of the sky, and the roll of the blue salt
water,

Fearing all things that have life in the womb of the seas and
the rivers,

Eating no fish to this day, nor ploughing the main, like the
Phœnics,

Manful with black-beaked ships, they abide in a sorrowful
region,

Vexed with the earthquake, and flame, and the sea-floods,
scourge of Poseidon.

Whelming the dwellings of men, and the toils of the
slow-footed oxen,

Drowning the barley and flax, and the hard-earned gold of
the harvest,

Up to the hillside vines, and the pastures skirting the wood-
land,

Inland the floods came yearly ; and after the waters a monster,
Bred of the slime, like the worms which are bred from the
muds of the Nile-bank,

Shapeless, a terror to see ; and by night it swam out to the
seaward,

Daily returning to feed with the dawn, and devoured of the
fairest,

Cattle, and children, and maids, till the terrified people
fled inland.

Fasting in sackcloth and ashes they came, both the king
and his people,

Came to the mountain of oaks, to the house of the terrible
sea gods,

Hard by the gulf in the rocks, where of old the world-wide
deluge
Sank to the inner abyss ; and the lake where the fish of the
goddess
Holy, undying, abide ; whom the priests feed daily with
dainties.
There to the mystical fish, high-throned in her chamber of
cedar,
Burnt they the fat of the flock ; till the flame shone far to
the seaward.
Three days fasting they prayed : but the fourth day the
priests of the goddess
Cunning in spells, cast lots, to discover the crime of the
people.
All day long they cast, till the house of the monarch was
taken,
Cepheus, king of the land ; and the faces of all gathered
blackness.
Then once more they cast ; and Cassiopœia was taken,
Deep-bosomed wife of the king, whom oft far-seeing Apollo
Watched well-pleased from the welkin, the fairest of Æthiop
women :
Fairest, save only her daughter ; for down to the ankle her
tresses
Rolled, blue-black as the night, ambrosial, joy to beholders.
Awful and fair she arose, most like in her coming to Hebe,
Queen before whom the Immortals arise, as she comes on
Olympus,
Out of the chamber of gold, which her son Hephaestos has
wrought her.
Such in her stature and eyes, and the broad white light of
her forehead

Stately she came from her place, and she spoke in the midst of the people.

“ Pure are my hands from blood ; most pure this heart in my bosom.

Yet one fault I remember this day : one word have I spoken ;

Rashly I spoke on the shore, and I dread lest the sea should have heard it.

Watching my child at her bath, as she plunged in the joy of her girlhood,

Fairer I called her in pride than Atergati, queen of the ocean.

Judge ye if this be my sin, for I know none other.” She ended ;

Wrapping her head in her mantle she stood, and the people were silent.

Answered the dark-browed priests, “ No word, once spoken, returneth

Even if uttered unwitting. Shall gods excuse our rashness ?

That which is done, that abides ; and the wrath of the sea is against us ;

Hers, and the wrath of her brother, the Sun-god, lord of the sheepfolds.

Fairer than her hast thou boasted thy daughter ? Ah folly ! for hateful,

Hateful are they to the gods, whoso, impious, liken a mortal,

Fair though he be, to their glory ; and hateful is that which is likened,

Grieving the eyes of their pride, and abominate, doomed to
their anger.

What shall be likened to gods? The unknown, who deep
in the darkness

Ever abide, twyformed, many-handed, terrible, shapeless.

Woe to the queen; for the land is defiled, and the people
accursed.

Take thou her therefore by night, thou ill-starred Cassiopœia,
Take her with us in the night, when the moon sinks low to
the westward;

Bind her aloft for a victim, a prey for the gorge of the
monster,

Far on the sea-girt rock, which is washed by the surges for-
ever;

So may the goddess accept her, and so may the land make
atonement,

Purged by her blood from its sin: so obey thou the doom
of the rulers."

Bitter in soul they went out, Cepheus and Cassiopœia,
Bitter in soul; and their hearts whirled round, as the leaves
in the eddy.

Weak was the queen, and rebelled: but the king, like a
shepherd of people,

Willed not the land should waste; so he yielded the life
of his daughter.

Deep in the wane of the night, as the moon sank low to
the westward,

They by the shade of the cliffs, with the horror of darkness
around them,

Stole, as ashamed, to a deed which became not the light of
the sunshine,

Slowly, the priests, and the queen, and the virgin bound in the galley.

Slowly they rowed to the rocks : but Cepheus far in the palace Sate in the midst of the hall, on his throne, like a shepherd of people,

Choking his woe, dry-eyed, while the slaves wailed loudly around him.

They on the sea-girt rock, which is washed by the surges forever,

Set her in silence, the guiltless, aloft with her face to the eastward.

Under a crag of the stone, where a ledge sloped down to the water ;

There they set Andromeden, most beautiful, shaped like a goddess,

Lifting her long white arms wide-spread to the walls of the basalt,

Chaining them, ruthless, with brass ; and they called on the might of the Rulers.

“Mystical fish of the seas, dread Queen whom \mathbb{A} ethiops honour,

Whelming the land in thy wrath, unavoidable, sharp as the sting-ray,

Thou, and thy brother the Sun, brain-smiting, lord of the sheepfold,

Scorching the earth all day, and then resting at night in thy bosom,

Take ye this one life for many, appeased by the blood of a maiden,

Fairest, and born of the fairest, a queen, most priceless of victims.”

Thrice they spat as they went by the maid: but her
mother delaying
Fondled her child to the last, heart-crushed; and the
warmth of her weeping
Fell on the breast of the maid, as her woe broke forth into
wailing.

“ Daughter! my daughter! forgive me! O curse not the
murderess! Curse not!
How have I sinned, but in love? Do the gods grudge glory
to mothers?
Loving I bore thee in vain in the fate-cursed bride-bed of
Cepheus,
Loving I fed thee and tended, and loving rejoiced in thy
beauty,
Blessing thy limbs as I bathed them, and blessing thy locks
as I combed them;
Decking thee, ripening to woman, I blest thee: yet blessing
I slew thee!
How have I sinned, but in love? O swear to me, swear
to thy mother,
Never to haunt me with curse, as I go to the grave in my
sorrow,
Childless and lone: may the gods never send me another,
to slay it!
See, I embrace thy knees—soft knees, where no babe will be
fondled—
Swear to me never to curse me, the hapless one, not in the
death-pang.”

Weeping she clung to the knees of the maid; and the
maid low answered—

“ Curse thee ! Not in the death-pang !” The heart of the lady was lightened.

Slowly she went by the ledge ; and the maid was alone in the darkness.

Watching the pulse of the oars die down, as her own died with them,

Tearless, dumb with amaze she stood, as a storm-stunned nestling

Fallen from bough or from eave lies dumb, which the home-going herdsman

Fancies a stone, till he catches the light of its terrified eyeball.

So through the long, long hours the maid stood helpless and hopeless,

Wide-eyed, downward gazing in vain at the black blank darkness.

Feebly at last she began, while wild thoughts bubbled within her—

“ Guiltless I am : why thus then ? Are gods more ruthless than mortals ?

Have they no mercy for youth ? no love for the souls who have loved them ?

Even as I loved thee, dread sea, as I played by thy margin, Blessing thy wave as it cooled me, thy wind as it breathed on my forehead,

Bowing my head to thy tempest, and opening my heart to thy children,

Silvery fish, wreathed shell, and the strange lithe things of the water,

Tenderly casting them back, as they gasped on the beach in the sunshine,

Home to their mother—in vain ! for mine sits childless in anguish !

Oh dread sea ! false sea ! I dreamed what I dreamed of thy goodness ;

Dreamed of a smile in thy gleam, of a laugh in the splash of thy ripple :

False and devouring thou art, and the great world dark and despiteful."

Awed by her own rash words she was still : and her eyes to the seaward

Looked for an answer of wrath : far off, in the heart of the darkness,

Bright white mists rose slowly ; beneath them the wandering ocean

Glimmered and glowed to the deepest abyss ; and the knees of the maiden

Trembled and sank in her fear, as afar, like a dawn in the midnight,

Rose from their seaweed chamber the choir of the mystical sea-maids.

Onward toward her they came, and her heart beat loud at their coming,

Watching the bliss of the gods, as they wakened the cliffs with their laughter.

Onward they came in their joy, and before them the roll of the surges

Sank, as the breeze sank dead, into smooth green foam-flecked marble,

Awed ; and the crags of the cliff, and the pines of the mountain were silent.

Onward they came in their joy, and around them the lamps of the sea-nymphs,

Myriad fiery globes, swam panting and heaving ; and rainbows
 Crimson and azure and emerald, were broken in star-showers,
 lighting
 Far through the wine-dark depths of the crystal, the gardens
 of Nereus,
 Coral and sea-fan and tangle, the blooms and the palms of
 the ocean.

Onward they came in their joy, more white than the
 foam which they scattered,
 Laughing and singing, and tossing and twining, while eager,
 the Tritons
 Blinded with kisses their eyes, unreproved, and above them
 in worship
 Hovered the terns, and the seagulls swept past them on
 silvery pinions
 Echoing softly their laughter ; around them the wandering
 dolphins
 Sighed as they plunged, full of love ; and the great sea-
 horses which bore them
 Curved up their crests in their pride to the delicate arms of
 the maidens,
 Pawing the spray into gems, till a fiery rainfall, unharzing,
 Sparkled and gleamed on the limbs of the nymphs, and the
 coils of the mermen.

Onward they went in their joy, bathed round with the
 fiery coolness,
 Needing nor sun nor moon, self-lighted, immortal : but
 others,
 Pitiful, floated in silence apart ; in their bosoms the sea-
 boys,

Slain by the wrath of the seas, swept down by the anger of
Nereus ;
Hapless, whom never again on strand or on quay shall their
mothers
Welcome with garlands and vows to the temple, but wearily
pining
Gaze over island and bay for the sails of the sunken ; they
heedless
Sleep in soft bosoms forever, and dream of the surge and
the sea-maids.

Onward they passed in their joy ; on their brows neither
sorrow nor anger ;
Self-sufficing, as gods, never heeding the woe of the
maiden.
She would have shrieked for their mercy : but shame made
her dumb ; and their eyeballs
Stared on her careless and still, like the eyes in the house
of the idols.
Seeing they saw not, and passed, like a dream, on the mur-
muring ripple.

Stunned by the wonder she gazed, wide-eyed, as the
glory departed.
“ Oh fair shapes ! far fairer than I ! Too fair to be
ruthless !
Gladden mine eyes once more with your splendour, unlike
to my fancies ;
You, then, smiled in the sea-gleam, and laughed in the splash
of the ripple.
Awful I deemed you and formless ; inhuman, monstrous as
idols :

Lo, when ye came, ye were women, more loving and
lovelier, only ;
Like in all else ; and I blest you : why blest ye not me for
my worship ?
Had you no mercy for me, the guiltless ? Ye pitied the
sea-boys,
Why not me, then, more hapless by far ? Does your sight
and your knowledge
End with the marge of the waves ? Is the world which ye
dwell in not our world ?”

Over the mountain aloft ran a rush and a roll and a
roaring ;
Downward the breeze came indignant, and leaped with a
howl to the water,
Roaring in cranny and crag, till the pillars and clefts of the
basalt
Rang like a god-swept lyre, and her brain grew mad with
the noises ;
Crashing and lapping of waters, and sighing and tossing of
weed-beds,
Gurgle and whisper and hiss of the foam, while thundering
surges
Boomed in the wave-worn halls, as they champed at the
roots of the mountain.
Hour after hour in the darkness the wind rushed fierce to
the landward,
Drenching the maiden with spray ; she shivering, weary and
drooping,
Stood with her heart full of thoughts, till the foam-crests
gleamed in the twilight,
Leaping and laughing around, and the east grew red with
the dawning.

Then on the ridge of the hills rose the broad bright sun
in his glory,
Hurling his arrows abroad on the glittering crests of the
, surges,
Gilding the soft round bosoms of wood, and the downs of
the coastland,
Gilding the weeds at her feet, and the foam-laced teeth of
the ledges,
Showing the maiden her home through the veil of her locks,
as they floated
Glistening, damp with the spray, in a long black cloud to
the landward.
High in the far-off glens rose thin blue curls from the home-
steads ;
Softly the low of the herds, and the pipe of the out-going
herdsman,
Slid to her ear on the water, and melted her heart into
weeping.
Shuddering, she tried to forget them ; and straining her eyes
to the seaward,
Watched for her doom, as she wailed, but in vain, to the
terrible Sun-god.

“Dost thou not pity me, Sun, though thy wild dark sister
be ruthless,
Dost thou not pity me here, as thou seest me desolate,
weary,
Sickened with shame and despair, like a kid torn young
from its mother ?
What if my beauty insult thee, then blight it : but me—
Oh spare me !
Spare me yet, ere he be here, fierce, tearing, unbearable !
See me,

See me, how tender and soft, and thus helpless ! See how
I shudder,
Fancying only my doom. Wilt the shine thus bright,
when it takes me ?
Are there no deaths save this, great Sun ? No fiery
arrow,
Lightning, or deep-mouthed wave ? Why thus ? What
music in shrieking,
Pleasure in warm live limbs torn slowly ? And dar'st thou
behold them !
Oh, thou hast watched worse deeds ! All sights are alike
to thy brightness !
What if thou waken the birds to their song, dost thou waken
no sorrow ;
Waken no sick to their pain ; no captive to wrench at his
fetters ?
Smile on the garden and fold, and on maidens who sing at
the milking ;
Flash into tapestried chambers, and peep in the eyelids of
lovers,
Showing the blissful their bliss—Dost love, then, the place
where thou smilest ?
Lovest thou cities aflame, fierce blows, and the shrieks of
the widow ?
Lovest thou corpse-strewn fields, as thou lightest the path
of the vulture ?
Lovest thou these, that thou gazest so gay on my tears, and
my mother's,
Laughing alike at the horror of one, and the bliss of
another ?
What dost thou care, in thy sky, for the joys and sorrows
of mortals ?

Colder art thou than the nymphs: in thy broad bright eye
is no seeing.

Hadst thou a soul—as much soul as the slaves in the house
of my father,

Wouldst thou not save? Poor thralls! they pitied me,
clung to me weeping,

Kissing my hands and my feet—What, are gods more
ruthless than mortals?

Worse than the souls which they rule? Let me die: they
war not with ashes!"

Sudden she ceased, with a shriek: in the spray, like a
hovering foam-bow,

Hung, more fair than the foam-bow, a boy in the bloom
of his manhood,

Golden-haired, ivory-limbed, ambrosial; over his shoul-
der

Hung for a veil of his beauty the gold-fringed folds of the
goat-skin,

Bearing the brass of his shield, as the sun flashed clear on
its clearness.

Curved on his thigh lay a falchion; and under the gleam
of his helmet

Eyes more blue than the main shone awful, around him
Athené

Shed in her love such grace, such state, and terrible
daring.

Hovering over the water he came, upon glittering
pinions,

Living, a wonder, outgrown from the tight-laced gold of his
sandals;

Bounding from billow to billow, and sweeping the crests like
a sea-gull;

Leaping the gulfs of the surge, as he laughed in the joy of his leaping.

Fair and majestic he sprang to the rock; and the maiden in wonder

Gazed for awhile, and then hid in the dark-rolling wave of her tresses;

Fearful, the light of her eyes; while the boy (for her sorrow had awed him)

Blushed at her blushes, and vanished, like mist on the cliffs at the sunrise.

Fearful at length she looked forth: he was gone: she, wild with amazement,

Wailed for her mother aloud: but the wail of the wind only answered.

Sudden he flashed into sight, by her side; in his pity and anger

Moist were his eyes; and his breath like a rose-bed, as bolder and bolder,

Hovering under her brows, like a swallow that haunts by the house-eaves,

Delicate-handed, he lifted the veil of her hair; while the maiden

Motionless, frozen with fear, wept loud; till his lips unclosing

Poured from their pearl-strung portal the musical wave of his wonder.

“Ah,” well spoke she, the wise one, the gray eyed Pallas Athéné,—

“Known to Immortals alone are the prizes which lie for the heroes

Ready prepared at their feet; for requiring a little, the rulers

Pay back the loan tenfold to the man who, careless of pleasure,
Thirsting for honour and toil, fares forth on a perilous errand
Led by the guiding of gods, and strong in the strength of Immortals.
Thus have they led me to thee: from afar, unknowing, I marked thee,
Shining, a snow-white cross on the dark-green walls of the sea-cliff;
Carven in marble I deemed thee, a perfect work of the craftsman.
Likeness of Amphitrité, or far-famed Queen Cythereia.
Curious I came, till I saw how thy tresses streamed in the sea-wind,
Glistening, black as the night, and thy lips moved slow in thy wailing.
Speak again now—Oh speak! For my soul is stirred to avenge thee;
Tell me what barbarous horde, without law, unrighteous and heartless,
Hateful to gods and to men, thus have bound thee, a shame to the sunlight,
Scorn and prize to the sailor: but my prize now; for a coward,
Coward and shameless were he, who so finding a glorious jewel
Cast on the wayside by fools, would not win it and keep it and wear it,
Even as I will thee; for I swear by the head of my father,
Bearing thee over the sea-wave, to wed thee in Argos the fruitful,

Beautiful, meed of my toil no less than this head which I
carry,

Hidden here fearful—Oh speak!”

But the maid, still dumb with amazement,
Watered her bosom with weeping, and longed for her home
and her mother.

Beautiful, eager, he wooed her, and kissed off her tears
as he hovered,

Roving at will, as a bee, on the brows of a rock nymph-
haunted,

Garlanded over with vine, and acanthus, and clambering
roses,

Cool in the fierce still noon, where streams glance clear in
the moss-beds,

Hums on from blossom to blossom, and mingles the sweets
as he tastes them.

Beautiful, eager, he kissed her, and clasped her yet closer
and closer,

Praying her still to speak—

“ Not cruel nor rough did my mother
Bear me to broad-browed Zeus in the depths of the brass-
covered dungeon ;

Neither in vain, as I think, have I talked with the cunning
of Hermes,

Face unto face, as a friend ; or from gray-eyed Pallas
Athené

Learned what is fit, and respecting myself, to respect in my
dealings

Those whom the gods should love ; so fear not ; to chaste
espousals

Only I woo thee, and swear, that a queen, and alone with-
out rival

By me thou sittest in Argos of Hellas, throne of my fathers,
Worshipped by fair-haired kings: why callest thou still on thy mother?
Why did she leave thee thus here? For no foeman has bound thee; no foeman winning with strokes of the sword such a prize, would so leave it behind him."

Just as at first some colt, wild-eyed, with quivering nostril,
Plunges in fear of the curb, and the fluttering robes of the rider;
Soon, grown bold by despair, submits to the will of his master,
Tamer and tamer each hour, and at last, in the pride of obedience,
Answers the heel with a curvet, and arches his neck to be fondled,
Cowed by the need that maid grew tame; while the hero indignant
Tore at the fetters which held her: the brass, too cunningly tempered,
Held to the rock by the nails, deep wedged; till the boy, red with anger,
Drew from his ivory thigh, keen flashing, a falchion of diamond—
"Now let the work of the smith try strength with the arms of Immortals!"
Dazzling it fell; and the blade, as the vine-hook shears off the vine-bough,
Carved through the strength of the brass, till her arms fell soft on his shoulder.

Once she essayed to escape : but the ring of the water was
round her,

Round her the ring of his arms ; and despairing she sank on
his bosom.

Then, like a fawn when startled, she looked with a shriek
to the seaward.

“ Touch me not, wretch that I am ! For accursed, a
shame and a hissing,

Guiltless, accursed no less, I await the revenge of the sea-
gods.

Yonder it comes ! Ah go ! Let me perish unseen, if I
perish !

Spare me the shame of thine eyes, when merciless fangs
must tear me

Piecemeal ! Enough to endure by myself in the light of
the sunshine

Guiltless, the death of a kid !”

But the boy still lingered around her.

Loath, like a boy, to forego her, and wakened the cliffs
with his laughter.

“ Yon is the foe, then ? A beast of the sea ? I had deemed
him immortal

Titan, or Proteus' self, or Nereus, foeman of sailors :

Yet would I fight with them all, but Poseidon, shaker of
mountains,

Uncle of mine, whom I fear, as is fit ; for he haunts on
Olympus,

Holding the third of the world ; and the gods all rise at his
coming.

Unto none else will I yield, god-helped : how then to a
monster

Child of the earth and of night, unreasoning, shapeless,
accursed?"

"Art thou, too, then a god?"

"No god I," smiling he answered,
"Mortal as thou, yet divine: but mortal the herds of the
ocean,
Equal to men in that only, and less in all else; for they
nourish
Blindly the life of the lips, untaught by the gods, without
wisdom:
Shame if I fled before such!"

In her heart new life was enkindled,
Worship and trust, fair parents of love: but she answered
him sighing.

"Beautiful, why wilt thou die? Is the light of the sun,
then, so worthless,
Worthless to sport with thy fellows in flowery glades of the
forest,
Under the broad green oaks, where never again shall I
wander,
Tossing the ball with my maidens, or wreathing the altar
in garlands,
Careless, with dances and songs, till the glens rang loud to
our laughter.
Too full of death the great earth is already; the halls full
of weepers,
Quarried by tombs all cliffs, and the bones gleam white on
the sea-floor,
Numberless, gnawn by the herds who attend on the pitiless
sea-gods,

Even as mine will be soon: and yet noble it seems to me,
dying,

Giving my life for the many, to save to the arms of their
lovers

Maidens and youths for awhile: thee, fairest of all, shall I
slay thee?

Add not thy bones to the many, thus angering idly the
dread ones!

Either the monster will crush, or the sea-queen's self over-
whelm thee,

Vengeful, in tempest and foam, and the thundering walls
of the surges.

Why wilt thou follow me down? can we love in the black
blank darkness?

Love in the realms of the dead, in the land where all is
forgotten?

Why wilt thou follow me down? is it joy, on the desolate
oozes,

Meagre to flit, gray ghosts in the depths of the gray salt
water?

Beautiful! why wilt thou die, and defraud fair girls of thy
manhood?

Surely one waits for thee longing, afar in the isles of the
ocean.

Go thy way; I mine; for the gods grudge pleasure to
mortals."

Sobbing she ended her moan, as her neck, like a storm-
bent lily,

Drooped with the weight of her woe, and her limbs sank,
weary with watching,

Soft on the hard-ledged rock: but the boy, with his eye on
the monster,

Clasped her, and stood, like a god ; and his lips curved
proud as he answered—

“ Great are the pitiless sea-gods : but greater the Lord of
Olympus ;

Greater the *Ægis*-wielder, and greater is she who attends
him.

Clear-eyed Justice, her name is, the counsellor, loved of
Athené ;

Helper of heroes, who dare, in the god-given might of their
manhood,

Greatly to do and to suffer, and far in the fens and the
forests

Smite the devourers of men, Heaven-hated, brood of the
giants,

Twyformed, strange, without like, who obey not the
golden-haired Rulers.

Vainly rebelling they rage, till they die by the swords of
the heroes,

Even as this must die ; for I burn with the wrath of my
father,

Wandering, led by Athené ; and dare whatsoever betides
me.

Led by Athené I won from the gray-haired terrible sisters
Secrets hidden from men, when I found them asleep on the
sand-hills,

Keeping their eye and their tooth, till they showed me the
perilous pathway

Over the waterless ocean, the valley that led to the
Gorgon.

Her too I slew in my craft, Medusa, the beautiful
horror ;

Taught by Athené I slew her, and saw not herself, but her image,
Watching the mirror of brass, in the shield which a goddess had lent me ;
Cleaving her brass-scaled throat, as she lay with her adders around her,
Fearless I bore off her head, in the folds of the mystical goat-skin,
Hide of Amaltheié, fair nurse of the *Ægis*-wielder.
Hither I bear it, a gift to the gods, and a death to my foemen ;
Freezing the seer to stone ; so hide thine eyes from the horror.
Kiss me but once, and I go."

Then lifting her neck, like a sea-bird Peering up over the wave, from the foam-white swells of her bosom,
Blushing she kissed him : afar on the topmost Idalian sum-
mit
Laughed in the joy of her heart, far-seeing, the Queen Aphrodité.

Loosing his arms from her waist he flew upward, awaiting the sea-beast.
Onward it came from the southward, as bulky and black as a galley,
Lazily coasting along, as the fish fled leaping before it ;
Lazily breasting the ripple, and watching by sandbar and headland,
Listening for laughter of maidens at bleaching, or song of the fisher,
Children at play on the pebbles, or cattle that pawed on the sandhills.

Rolling and dripping it came, where bedded in glistening
purple

Cold on the cold sea-weeds lay the long white sides of the
maiden,

Trembling, her face in her hands, and her tresses afloat on
the water.

As when an osprey aloft, dark-eyebrowed, royally-
crested,

Flags on by creek and by cove, and in scorn of the anger
of Nereus

Ranges, the king of the shore; if he see on a glittering
shallow,

Chasing the bass and the mullet, the fin of a wallowing
dolphin,

Halting, he wheels round slowly, in doubt at the weight of
his quarry,

Whether to clutch it alive, or to fall on the wretch like a
plummet,

Stunning with terrible talon the life of the brain in the hind-
head:

Then rushes up with a scream, and stooping the wrath of
his eyebrows

Falls from the sky like a star, while the wind rattles hoarse
in his pinions.

Over him closes the foam for a moment; then from the
sand-bed

Rolls up the great fish, dead, and his side gleams white in
the sunshine.

Thus fell the boy on the beast, unveiling the face of the
Gorgon;

Thus fell the boy on the beast; thus rolled up the beast in
his horror,

Once, as the dead eyes glared into his ; then his sides, death-sharpened,
Stiffened and stood, brown rock, in the wash of the wandering water.

Beautiful, eager, triumphant, he leaped back again to his treasure ;
Leaped back again, full blest, towards arms spread wide to receive him.
Brimful of honour he clasped her, and brimful of love she caressed him,
Answering lip with lip ; while above them the Queen Aphrodité
Poured on their foreheads and limbs, unseen, ambrosial odours,
Givers of longing, and rapture, and chaste content in espousals.
Happy whom ere they be wedded anoints she, the Queen Aphrodité !

Laughing she called to her sister, the chaste Tritonid Athené,
Seest thou yonder thy pupil, thou maid of the *Ægis*-wielder,
How he has turned himself wholly to love, and caresses a damsel,
Dreaming no longer of honour, or danger, or Pallas Athené ?
Sweeter, it seems, to the young my gifts are ; so yield me the stripling ;
Yield him me now, lest he die in his prime, like hapless Adonis."

Smiling she answered in turn, that chaste Tritonid
Athené :

“ Dear unto me, no less than to thee, is the wedlock of
heroes ;

Dear, who can worthily win him a wife not unworthy ; and
noble,

Pure with the pure to beget brave children, the like of their
father.

Happy, who thus stands linked to the heroes who were,
and who shall be ;

Girdled with holiest awe, not sparing of self ; for his
mother

Watches his steps with the eyes of the gods ; and his wife
and his children

Move him to plan and to do in the farm and the camp and
the council.

Thence comes weal to a nation : but woe upon woe, when
the people

Mingle in love at their will, like the brutes, not heeding the
future.”

Then from her gold-strung loom, where she wrought in
her chamber of cedar,

Awful and fair she arose ; and she went by the glens of
Olympus ;

Went by the isles of the sea, and the wind never ruffled
her mantle ;

Went by the water of Crete, and the black-beaked fleets
of the Phœnics ;

Came to the sea-girt rock which is washed by the surges
forever,

Bearing the wealth of the gods, for a gift to the bride of a
hero.

There she met Andromeden and Persea, shaped like Immortals ;
 Solemn and sweet was her smile, while their hearts beat loud at her coming ;
 Solemn and sweet was her smile, as she spoke to the pair in her wisdom.

“ Three things hold we, the Rulers, who sit by the founts of Olympus,
 Wisdom, and prowess, and beauty ; and freely we pour them on mortals ;
 Pleased at our image in man, as father at his in his children.
 One thing only we grudge to mankind, when a hero, unthankful,
 Boasts of our gifts as his own, stiffnecked, and dishonours the givers,
 Turning our weapons against us. Him Até follows avenging ;
 Slowly she tracks him and sure, as a lyme-hound ; sudden she grips him,
 Crushing him, blind in his pride, for a sign and a terror to folly.
 This we avenge, as is fit ; in all else never weary of giving.
 Come then, damsel, and know if the gods grudge pleasure to mortals.”

Loving and gentle she spoke : but the maid stood in awe, as the goddess
 Plaited with soft swift finger her tresses, and decked her in jewels,

Armlet and anklet and earbell ; and over her shoulders a necklace,
Heavy, enamelled, the flower of the gold and the brass of the mountain.
Trembling with joy she gazed, so well Hæphaistos had made it,
Deep in the forges of *Ætna*, while Charis his lady beside him,
Mingled her grace in his craft, as he wrought for his sister Athené.
Then on the brows of the maiden a veil bound Pallas Athené ;
Ample it fell to her feet, deep-fringed, a wonder of weaving.
Ages and ages agone it was wrought on the heights of Olympus,
Wrought in the gold-strung loom, by the finger of cunning Athené.
In it she wove all creatures that teem in the womb of the ocean ;
Nereid, siren, and triton, and dolphin, and arrowy fishes Glittering round, many-hued, on the flame-red folds of the mantle.
In it she wove, too, a town where gray-haired kings sat in judgment ;
Sceptre in hand in the market they sat, doing right by the people,
Wise : while above watched Justice, and near, far-seeing Apollo.
Round it she wove for a fringe all herbs of the earth and the water,
Violet, asphodel, ivy, and vine-leaves, roses and lilies,

Coral and sea-fan, and tangle, the blooms and the palms of
the ocean :

Now from Olympus she bore it, a dower to the bride of a
hero.

Over the limbs of the damsel she wrapped it: the maid still
trembled,

Shading her face with her hands; for the eyes of the god-
dess were awful.

Then, as a pine upon Ida when southwest winds blow
landward,

Stately she bent to the damsel, and breathed on her: under
her breathing

Taller and fairer she grew; and the goddess spoke in her
wisdom.

“ Courage I give thee; the heart of a queen, and the
mind of Immortals,

Godlike to talk with the gods, and to look on their eyes
unshrinking;

Fearing the sun and the stars no more, and the blue salt
water;

Fearing us only, the lords of Olympus, friends of the
heroes;

Chastely and wisely to govern thyself and thy house and
thy people,

Bearing a godlike race to thy spouse, till dying I set
thee

High for a star in the heavens, a sign and a hope to the
seamen,

Spreading thy long white arms all night in the heights of
the æther,

Hard by thy sire and the hero thy spouse, while near thee
thy mother
Sits in her ivory chair, as she plaits ambrosial tresses.
All night long thou wilt shine ; all day thou wilt feast on
Olympus,
Happy, the guest of the gods, by thy husband, the god
begotten."

Blissful, they turned them to go : but the fair-tressed
Pallas Athené
Rose, like a pillar of tall white cloud, toward silver Olym-
pus ;
Far above ocean and shore, and the peaks of the isles and
the mainland ;
Where no frost nor storm is, in clear blue windless
abysses,
High in the home of the summer, the seats of the happy
Immortals,
Shrouded in keen deep blaze, unapproachable ; there ever
youthful
Hebé, Harmonié, and the daughter of Jove, Aphro-
dité,
Whirled in the white-linked dance with the gold-crowned
Hours and the Graces,
Hand within hand, while clear piped Phœbe, queen of the
woodlands.
All day long they rejoiced : but Athené still in her
chamber
Bent herself over her loom, as the stars rang loud to her
singing,
Chanting of order and right, and of foresight, warden of
nations ;

Chanting of labour and craft, and of wealth in the port and
the garner ;
Chanting of valour and fame, and the man who can fall with
the foremost,
Fighting for children and wife, and the field which his father
bequeathed him.
Sweetly and solemnly sang she, and planned new lessons for
mortals :
Happy, who hearing obey her, the wise unsullied Athené.

SAINT MAURA.

A. D. 304.

THANK God ! Those gazers' eyes are gone at last
The guards are crouching underneath the rock ;
The lights are fading in the town below,
Around the cottage which this morn was ours.
Kind sun, to set, and leave us here alone ;
Alone upon our crosses with our God ;
While all the angels watch us from the stars !
Kind moon, to shine so clear and full on him,
And bathe his limbs in glory, for a sign
Of what awaits him ! Oh look on him, Lord !
Look, and remember how he saved Thy lamb !
 Oh listen to me, teacher, husband, love,
Never till now loved utterly ! Oh say,
Say you forgive me ? No—you must not speak .
You said it to me hours ago—long hours !
Now you must rest, and when to-morrow comes
Speak to the people, call them home to God,
A deacon on the Cross, as in the Church,

And plead from off the tree with outspread arms,
To show them that the Son of God endured
For them—and me. Hush! I alone will speak,
And while away the hours till dawn for you.
I know you have forgiven me; as I lay
Beneath your feet, while they were binding me,
I knew I was forgiven then! When I cried
“Here am I, husband! The lost lamb returned,
All re-baptized in blood!” and you said, “Come!
Come to thy bride-bed, martyr, wife once more!”
From that same moment all my pain was gone;
And ever since those sightless eyes have smiled
Love—love! Alas, those eyes! They made me fall.
I could not bear to see them bleeding, dark,
Never, no never to look into mine;
Never to watch me round the little room
Singing about my work, or flash on me
Looks bright with counsel.—Then they drove me mad
With talk of nameless tortures waiting you—
And I could save you! You would hear your love—
They knew you loved me, cruel men! And then—
Then came a dream; to say one little word,
One easy wicked word, we both might say,
And no one hear us, but the lictors round;
One tiny sprinkle of the incense grains,
And both, both free! And life had just begun—
Only three months—short months—your wedded wife!
Only three months within the cottage there—
Hoping I bore your child. . . .
Ah! husband! Saviour! God! think gently of me!
I am forgiven! . . .

And then another dream;

A flash—so quick, I could not bear the blaze ;
I could not see the smoke among the light—
To wander out through unknown lands, and lead
You by the hand through hamlet, port, and town,
On, on, until we died ; and stand each day
To glory in you, as you preached and prayed
From rock and bourne-stone, with that voice, those words,
Mingled of fire and honey—you would wake,
Bend, save whole nations ! would not that atone
For one short word ?—ay, make it right, to save
You, you, to fight the battles of the Lord ?
And so—and so—alas ! you know the rest !
You answered me . . .
Ah cruel words ! No ! Blessed, godlike words !
You had done nobly had you struck me dead,
Instead of striking me to life !—the temptress ! . . .
“ Traitor ! apostate ! dead to God and me !”—
“ The smell of death upon me ?”—so it was !
True ! true ! well spoken, hero ! Oh they snapped,
Those words, my madness, like the angel’s voice
Thrilling the graves to birth-pangs. All was clear.
There was but one right thing in the world to do ;
And I must do it. . . . Lord, have mercy ! Christ !
Help through my womanhood : or I shall fail
Yet, as I failed before ! . . . I could not speak—
I could not speak for shame and misery,
And terror of my sin, and of the things
I knew were coming : but in heaven, in heaven !
There we should meet, perhaps—and by that time
I might be worthy of you once again—
Of you, and of my God. . . . So I went out.

* * * *

Will you hear more, and so forget the pain?
And yet I dread to tell you what comes next;
Your love will feel it all again for me.
No! it is over; and the woe that's dead
Rises next hour a glorious angel. Love!
Say, shall I tell you? Ah! your lips are dry!
To-morrow when they come, we must entreat,
And they will give you water. One to-day,
A soldier, gave me water in a sponge
Upon a reed, and said, "Too fair! too young!
She might have been a gallant soldier's wife!"
And then I cried, "I am a soldier's wife!
A hero's!" And he smiled, but let me drink.
God bless him for it!

So they led me back:

And as I went, a voice was in my ears
Which rang through all the sunlight, and the breeze
And blaze of all the garden slopes below,
And through the harvest-voices, and the moan
Of cedar-forests on the cliffs above,
And round the shining rivers, and the peaks
Which hung beyond the cloud-bed of the west,
And round the ancient stones about my feet.
Out of all heaven and earth it rang, and cried
"My hand hath made all these. Am I too weak
To give thee strength to say so?" Then my soul
Spread like a clear blue sky within my breast,
While all the people made a ring around,
And in the midst the judge spoke smilingly—
"Well? hast thou brought him to a better mind?"
"No! He has brought me to a better mind!"—
I cried, and said beside—I know not what—

Words which I learned from thee—I trust in God
Naught fierce or rude—for was I not a girl
Three months ago beneath my mother's roof?
I thought of that. She might be there! I looked—
She was not there! I hid my face and wept.
And when I looked again, the judge's eye
Was on me, cold and steady, deep in thought—
“She knows what shame is still; so strip her.” “Ah!”
I shrieked, “Not that, Sir! Any pain! So young
I am—a wife too—I am not my own,
But his—my husband's!” But they took my shawl,
And tore my tunic off, and there I stood
Before them all. . . . Husband! you love me still?
Indeed I pleaded! Oh, shine out, kind moon,
And let me see him smile! Oh! how I prayed,
While some cried “Shame!” And some “She is too young!”
And some mocked—ugly words: God shut my ears.
And yet no earthquake came to swallow me.
While all the court around, and walls, and roofs,
And all the earth and air were full of eyes,
Eyes, eyes, which scorched my limbs like burning flame,
Until my brain seemed bursting from my brow:
And yet no earthquake came! And then I knew
This body was not yours alone, but God's—
His loan—He needed it: and after that
The worst was come, and any torture more
A change—a lightening; and I did not shriek—
Once only—once, when first I felt the whip—
It coiled so keen around my side, and sent
A fire-flash through my heart which choked me—then
I shrieked—that once. The foolish echo rang
So far and long—I prayed you might not hear.

And then a mist, which hid the ring of eyes,
Swam by me, and a murmur in my ears
Of humming bees around the limes at home ;
And I was all alone with you and God.
And what they did to me I hardly know ;
I felt, and did not feel. Now I look back,
It was not after all so very sharp—
So do not pity me. It made me pray ;
Forget my shame in pain, and pain in you,
And you in God : and once, when I looked down,
And saw an ugly sight—so many wounds !
“ What matter ? ” thought I. “ His dear eyes are dark ;
For them alone I kept this skin so white—
A foolish pride ! As God wills now. ’ Tis just.”

But then the judge spoke out in haste, “ She is mad,
Or fenced by magic arts ! She feels no pain ! ”
He did not know I was on fire within :
Better he should not ; so his sin was less :
Then he cried fiercely, “ Take the slave away,
And crucify her by her husband’s side ! ”
And at those words a film came on my face—
A sickening rush of joy—was that
That my reward ? I rose, and tried to go—
But all the eyes had vanished, and the judge ;
And all the buildings melted into mist ;
So how they brought me here I cannot tell.
Here, here, by you, until the judgment-day,
And after that forever and forever !
Ah ! If I could but reach that hand ! One touch !
One finger-tip, to send the thrill through me
I felt but yesterday !—No ! I can wait :—
Another body !—Oh, new limbs are ready,

Free, pure, instinct with soul through every nerve,
Kept for us in the treasures of God.
They will not mar the love they try to speak,
They will not fail my soul, as these have done !

* * * * *

Will you hear more ? Nay—you know all the rest .
Yet those poor eyes—alas ! they could not see
My waking, when you hung above me there
With hands outstretched to bless the penitent—
Your penitent—even like The Lord Himself—
I gloried in you !—like The Lord Himself !
Sharing His very sufferings, to the crown
Of thorns which they had put on that dear brow
To make you like Him—show you as you were !
I told them so ! I bid them look on you,
And see there what was the highest throne on earth—
The throne of suffering, where the Son of God
Endured and triumphed for them. But they laughed ;
All but one soldier, gray, with many scars ;
And he stood silent. Then I crawled to you,
And kissed your bleeding feet, and called aloud—
You heard me ! You know all ! I am at peace.
Peace, peace, as still and bright as is the moon
Upon your limbs, came on me at your smile,
And kept me happy, when they dragged me back
From that last kiss, and spread me on the cross,
And bound my wrists and ankles—Do not sigh :
I prayed, and bore it : and since they raised me up
My eyes have never left your face, my own, my own,
Nor will, till death comes ! . . .

Do I feel much pain ?
Not much. Not mad 'enig. None I cannot bear.

It has become like part of my own life,
Or part of God's life in me—honour—bliss !
I dreaded madness, and instead comes rest ;
Rest deep and smiling, like a summer's night.
I should be easy, now if I could move
I cannot stir. Ah God ! these shoots of fire
Through all my limbs ! Hush, selfish girl ! He hears you !
Who ever found the cross a pleasant bed ?
Yes ; I can bear it, love. Pain is no evil
Unless it conquers us. These little wrists, now—
You said, one blessed night, they were too slender,
Too soft and slender for a deacon's wife—
Perhaps a martyr's :—You forgot the strength
Which God can give. The cord has cut them through ;
And yet my voice has never faltered yet.
Oh ! do not groan, or I shall long and pray
That you may die : and you must not die yet.
Not yet—they told us we might live three days
Two days for you to preach ! Two days to speak
Words which may wake the dead !

* * * * *

Hush ! is he sleeping ?

They say that men have slept upon the cross ;
So why not he ? . . . Thanks, Lord ! I hear him breathe :
And he will preach Thy word to-morrow !—save
Souls, crowds, for Thee ! And they will know his worth
Years hence—poor things, they know not what they do !—
And crown him martyr ; and his name will ring
Through all the shores of earth, and all the stars
Whose eyes are sparkling through their tears to see
His triumph—Preacher ! Martyr !—Ah—and me ?
If they must couple my poor name with his,

Let them tell all the truth—say how I loved him,
 And tried to damn him by that love ! O Lord
 Returning good for evil ! and was this
 The payment I deserved for such a sin ?
 To hang here on my cross, and look at him
 Until we kneel before Thy throne in heaven !

THE SANDS OF DEE.

I.

“O MARY, go and call the cattle home,
 And call the cattle home,
 And call the cattle home
 Across the sands of Dee ;”
 The western wind was wild and dank wi’ foam,
 And all alone went she.

II.

The western tide crept up along the sand,
 And o’er and o’er the sand,
 And round and round the sand,
 As far as eye could see.
 The rolling mist came down and hid the land—
 And never home came she.

III.

“Oh ! is it weed, or fish, or floating hair—
 A tress o’ golden hair,
 A drowned maiden’s hair
 Above the nets at sea ?
 Was never salmon yet that shone so fair
 Among the stakes on Dee.”

IV.

They rowed her in across the rolling foam,
 The cruel crawling foam,
 The cruel hungry foam
 To her grave beside the sea :
 But still the boatmen hear her call the cattle home
 Across the sands of Dee !

EARL HALDAN'S DAUGHTER

A BALLAD—A. D. 1400.

I.

IT was Earl Haldan's daughter,
 She looked across the sea ;
 She looked across the water,
 And long and loud laughed she :
 " The locks of six princesses
 Must be my marriage-fee,
 So hey benny boat, and ho bonny boat !
 Who comes a-wooing me !"

II.

It was Earl Haldan's daughter,
 She walked along the sand :
 When she was aware of a knight so fair,
 Come sailing to the land.
 His sails were all of velvet,
 His mast of beaten gold,
 And " hey bonny boat, and ho bonny boat,
 Who saileth here so bold ?"

III.

“ The locks of five princesses
 I won beyond the sea ;
 I shore their golden tresses,
 To fringe a cloak for thee.
 One handful yet is wanting,
 But one of all the tale ;
 So hey bonny boat, and ho bonny boat !
 Furl up thy velvet sail !”

IV.

He leapt into the water,
 That rover young and bold ;
 He gript Earl Haldan’s daughter,
 He shore her locks of gold ;
 “ Go weep, go weep, proud maiden,
 The tale is full to-day.
 Now hey bonny boat, and ho bonny boat !
 Sail Westward ho, and away !”

THE LAST BUCCANEER.

A BALLAD—A. D. 1740.

I.

OH England is a pleasant place for them that’s rich and high ;
 But England is a cruel place for such poor folks as I ;
 And such a port for mariners I ne’er shall see again,
 As the pleasant Isle of Avès, beside the Spanish main.

II.

There were forty craft in Avès that were both swift and stout,
All furnished well with small arms and cannons round about ;
And a thousand men in Avès made laws so fair and free
To choose their valiant captains and obey them loyally.

III.

Thence we sailed against the Spaniard with his hoards of plate and gold,
Which he wrung by cruel tortures from the Indian folk of old ;
Likewise the merchant captains, with hearts as hard as stone,
Which flog men and keel-haul them and starve them to the bone.

IV.

Oh the palms grew high in Avès and fruits that shone like gold,
And the colibris and parrots they were gorgeous to behold ;
And the negro maids to Avès from bondage fast did flee,
To welcome gallant sailors a-sweeping in from sea.

V.

Oh sweet it was in Avès to hear the landward breeze A-swing with good tobacco in a net between the trees,
With a negro lass to fan you while you listened to the roar
Of the breakers on the reef outside that never touched the shore.

VI.

But Scripture saith, an ending to all fine things must be,
So the King's ships sailed on Avès and quite put down
were we.

All day we fought like bulldogs, but they burst the booms
at night ;
And I fled in a piragua sore wounded from the fight.

VII.

Nine days I floated starving, and a negro lass beside,
Till for all I tried to cheer her, the poor young thing she
died ;

But as I lay a-gasping a Bristol sail came by,
And brought me home to England here to beg until I die.

VIII.

And now I'm old and going I'm sure I can't tell where ;
One comfort is this world's so hard I can't be worse off
there :

If I might but be a sea-dove I'd fly across the main,
To the pleasant Isle of Avès, to look at it once again.

THE THREE FISHERS

THREE fishers went sailing out into the West,
Out into the West as the sun went down ;
Each thought on the woman who loved him the best,
And the children stood watching them out of the town ;
For men must work, and women must weep,
And there's little to earn, and many to keep,
Though the harbour bar be moaning.

Three wives sat up in the light-house tower,
And they trimmed the lamps as the sun went down,
They looked at the squall, and they looked at the shower,
And the night rack came rolling up ragged and brown !
But men must work, and women must weep,
Though storms be sudden, and waters deep,
And the harbour bar be moaning.

Three corpses lay out on the shining sands
In the morning gleam as the tide went down,
And the women are weeping and wringing their hands
For those who will never come back to the town ;
For men must work, and women must weep,
And the sooner it's over, the sooner to sleep—
And good-by to the bar and its moaning.

William Makepeace Thackeray.

THE CHRONICLE OF THE DRUM.

PART I.

AT Paris, hard by the Maine barriers,
Whoever will choose to repair,
Midst a dozen of wooden-legged warriors,
May haply fall in with old Pierre.
On the sunshiny bench of a tavern,
He sits and he prates of old wars,
And moistens his pipe of tobacco
With a drink that is named after Mars.

The beer makes his tongue run the quicker,
And as long as his tap never fails,

Thus over his favourite liquor
Old Peter will tell his old tales.
Says he, "In my life's ninety summers,
Strange changes and chances I've seen,—
So here's to all gentlemen drummers
That ever have thumped on a skin.

" Brought up in the art military
For four generations we are ;
My ancestors drummed for King Harry,
The Huguenot lad of Navarre.
And as each man in life has his station,
According as Fortune may fix,
While Condé was waving the baton,
My grandsire was trolling the sticks.

" Ah ! those were the days for commanders !
What glories my grandfather won,
Ere bigots, and lackeys, and panders,
The fortunes of France had undone
In Germany, Flanders, and Holland,—
What foeman resisted us then ?
No ; my grandsire was ever victorious,
My grandsire and Monsieur Turenne.

" He died, and our noble battalions
The jade, fickle Fortune, forsook ;
And at Blenheim, in spite of our valiance,
The victory lay with Malbrook.
The news it was brought to King Louis ;
Corbleu ! how his majesty swore,
When he heard they had taken my grandsire,
And twelve thousand gentlemen more !

“ At Namurs, Ramillies, and Malplaquet
Were we posted, on plain or in trench ;
Malbrook only need to attack it,
And away from him scampered we French.
Cheer up ! 'tis no use to be glum, boys,—
'Tis written, since fighting begun,
That sometimes we fight and we conquer,
And sometimes we fight and we run.

“ To fight and to run was our fate ;
Our fortune and fame had departed ;
And so perished Louis the Great,—
Old, lonely, and half broken-hearted.
His coffin they pelted with mud,
His body they tried to lay hands on ;
And so having buried King Louis
They loyally served his great-grandson.

“ God save the beloved King Louis !
(For so he was nicknamed by some),
And now came my father to do his
King's orders, and beat on the drum.
My grandsire was dead, but his bones
Must have shaken, I'm certain, for joy,
To hear Daddy drumming the English
From the meadows of famed Fontenoy.

“ So well did he drum in that battle,
That the enemy showed us their backs ;
Corbleu ! it was pleasant to rattle
The sticks, and to follow old Saxe !
We next had Soubise as a leader,
And as luck hath its changes and fits,

At Rossbach, in spite of Dad's drumming,
'Tis said we were beaten by Fritz.

"And now Daddy crossed the Atlantic,
To drum for Montcalm and his men;
Morbleu ! but it makes a man frantic,
To think we were beaten again !

My Daddy he crossed the wide ocean,
My mother brought me on her neck,
And we came in the year fifty-seven
To guard the good town of Quebec.

"In the year fifty-nine came the Britons,—
Full well I remember the day,—
They knocked at our gates for admittance,
Their vessels were moored in our bay.
Says our general, 'Drive me yon red-coats
Away to the sea, whence they come !'
So we marched against Wolfe and his bull-dogs.
We marched at the sound of the drum.

"I think I can see my poor mammy
With me in her hand as she waits,
And our regiment, slowly retreating,
Pours back through the citadel gates.
Dear mammy, she looks in their faces,
And asks if her husband is come.
—He is lying all cold on the glacis,
And will never more beat on the drum.

"Come, drink, 'tis no use to be glum, boys;
He died like a soldier—in glory;
Here's a glass to the health of all drum-boys,
And now I'll commence my own story.

Once more did we cross the salt ocean ;
 We came in the year eighty-one ;
 And the wrongs of my father the drummer
 Were avenged by the drummer his son.

“ In Chesapeake Bay we were landed ;
 In vain strove the British to pass ;
 Rochambeau our armies commanded,
 Our ships they were led by De Grasse.
 Morbleu ! how I rattled the drumsticks,
 The day we marched into Yorktown !
 Ten thousand of beef-eating British
 Their weapons we caused to lay down.

“ Then homewards returning victorious,
 In peace to our country we came,
 And were thanked for our glorious actions
 By Louis Sixteenth of the name.
 What drummer on earth could be prouder
 Than I, while I drummed at Versailles
 To the lovely court-ladies in powder,
 And lappets, and long satin tails ?

“ The princes that day passed before us,
 Our countrymen’s glory and hope ;
 Monsieur, who was learned in Horace,
 D’Artois, who could dance the tight rope
 One night we kept guard for the Queen,
 At her majesty’s opera box,
 While the King, that majestical monarch,
 Sat filing at home at his locks.

“ Yes I drummed for the fair Antoinette ;
 And so smiling she looked, and so tender,

That our officers, privates, and drummers,
All vowed they would die to defend her.
But she cared not for us honest fellows,
Who fought and who bled in her wars ;
She sneered at our gallant Rochambeau,
And turned Lafayette out of doors.

“ Ventrebleu ! then I swore a great oath
No more to such tyrants to kneel ;
And so just to keep up my drumming,
One day I drummed down the Bastile !
Ho, landlord ! a stoup of fresh wine ;
Come, comrades, a bumper we’ll try,
And drink to the year eighty-nine,
And the glorious fourth of July !

“ Then bravely our cannon it thundered,
As onward our patriots bore ;
Our enemies were but a hundred,
And we twenty thousand or more.
They carried the news to King Louis,
He heard it as calm as you please ;
And like a majestical monarch,
Kept filing his locks and his keys.

“ We showed our republican courage,
We stormed and we broke the great gate in,
And we murdered the insolent governor
For daring to keep us a waiting.
Lambesc and his squadrons stood by ;
They never stirred finger or thumb ;
The saucy aristocrats trembled
As they heard the republican drum.

“ Hurrah ! what a storm was a-brewing !
 The day of our vengeance was come ;
 Through scenes of what carnage and ruin
 Did I beat on the patriot drum !
 Let’s drink to the famed tenth of August ;
 At midnight I beat the tattoo,
 And woke up the pikemen of Paris,
 To follow the bold Barbaroux.

“ With pikes, and with shouts, and with torches,
 Marched onwards our dusty battalions ;
 And we girt the tall castle of Louis,
 A million of tatterdemalions !
 We stormed the fair gardens where towered
 The walls of his heritage splendid ;
 Ah, shame on him, craven and coward,
 That had not the heart to defend it !

“ With the crown of his sires on his head,
 His nobles and knights by his side,
 At the foot of his ancestors’ palace
 ’Twere easy, methinks, to have died.
 But no ; when we burst through his barriers,
 Mid heaps of the dying and dead,
 In vain through the chambers we sought him,—
 He had turned like a craven and fled.

* * * *

“ You all know the Place de la Concorde ?
 ’Tis hard by the Tuilerie wall ;
 Mid terraces, fountains, and statues,
 There rises an obelisk tall.
 There rises an obelisk tall ;
 All garnished and gilded the base is ;

’Tis surely the gayest of all
Our beautiful city’s gay places.

“ Around it are gardens and flowers,
And the cities of France on their thrones,
Each, crowned with his circlet of flowers,
Sits watching this biggest of stones !
I love to go sit in the sun there,
The flowers and fountains to see,
And to think of the deeds that were done there,
In the glorious year ninety-three.

“ ’Twas here stood the altar of freedom,
And though neither marble nor gilding
Were used in those days to adorn
Our simple republican building,
Corbleu ! but the MERE GUILLOTINE
Cared little for splendour or show,
So you gave her an axe and a beam,
And a plank and a basket or so.

“ Awful, and proud, and erect
Here sate our republican goddess ;
Each morning her table we decked
With dainty aristocrats’ bodies.
The people each day flocked around,
As she sat at her meat and her wine ;
’Twas always the use of our nation
To witness the sovereign dine.

“ Young virgins with fair golden tresses,
Old silver-haired prelates and priests,
Dukes, marquises, barons, princesses,
Were splendidly served at her feasts.

Ventrebleu ! but we pampered our ogress
With the best that our nation could bring,
And dainty she grew in her progress,
And called for the head of a king !

“ She called for the blood of our king,
And straight from his prison we drew him ;
And to her with shouting we led him,
And took him, and bound him, and slew him.
‘ The monarchs of Europe against me
Have plotted a godless alliance ;
I’ll fling them the head of King Louis,’
She said, ‘ as my gage of defiance.’

“ I see him as now, for a moment,
Away from his jailers he broke,
And stood at the foot of the scaffold,
And lingered, and fain would have spoke.
‘ Ho, drummer ! quick ! silence yon Capet,’
Says Santerre, ‘ with a beat of your drum ;’
Lustily then did I tap it,
And the son of St. Louis was dumb.”

* * * *

PART II.

“ THE glorious days of September
Saw many aristocrats fall ;
'Twas then that our pikes drunk the blood,
In the beautiful breast of Lamballe.
Pardi, 'twas a beautiful lady !
I seldom have looked on her like ;
And I drummed for a gallant procession,
That marched with her head on a pike.

“ Let’s show the pale head to the Queen,
We said—she’ll remember it well ;
She looked from the bars of her prison,
And shrieked as she saw it, and fell.
We set up a shout at her screaming,
We laughed at the fright she had shown
At the sight of the head of her minion ;
How she’d tremble to part with her own !

“ We had taken the head of King Capet,
We called for the blood of his wife ;
Undaunted she came to the scaffold,
And bared her fair neck to the knife.
As she felt the foul fingers that touched her,
She shrunk, but she deigned not to speak,
She looked with a royal disdain,
And died with a blush on her cheek !

“ ’Twas thus that our country was saved ;
So told us the safety committee !
But psha ! I’ve the heart of a soldier,
All gentleness, mercy, and pity.
I loathed to assist at such deeds,
And my drum beat its loudest of tunes
As we offered to Justice offended
The blood of the bloody tribunes.

“ Away with such foul recollections !
No more of the axe and the block ;
I saw the last fight of the sections,
As they fell ’neath our guns at Saint Rock.
Young BONAPARTE led us that day ;
When he sought the Italian frontier,

I followed my gallant young captain,
I followed him many a long year.

“ We came to an army in rags,
Our general was but a boy,
When we first saw the Austrian flags
Flaunt proud in the fields of Savoy.
In the glorious year ninety-six,
We marched to the banks of the Po ;
I carried my drum and my sticks,
And we laid the proud Austrian low.

“ In triumph we entered Milan,
We seized on the Mantuan keys ;
The troops of the Emperor ran,
And the Pope he fell down on his knees.”—
Pierre’s comrades here called a fresh bottle,
And, clubbing together their wealth,
They drank to the Army of Italy,
And General Bonaparte’s health.

The drummer now bared his old breast,
And showed us a plenty of scars,
Rude presents that Fortune had made him,
In fifty victorious wars.
“ This came when I followed bold Kleber—
’Twas shot by a Mameluke gun ;
And this from an Austrian sabre,
When the field of Marengo was won.

“ My forehead has many deep furrows,
But this is the deepest of all ;
A Brunswicker made it at Jena,
Beside the fair river of Saal.

This cross, 'twas the Emperor gave it ;
(God bless him !) it covers a blow ;
I had it at Austerlitz fight,
As I beat on my drum in the snow.

“ ”Twas thus that we conquered and fought ;
But wherefore continue the story ?
There’s never a baby in France
But has heard of our chief and our glory,—
But has heard of our chief and our fame,
His sorrows and triumphs can tell,
How bravely Napoleon conquered,
How bravely and sadly he fell.

“ It makes my old heart to beat higher,
To think of the deeds that I saw ;
I followed bold Ney through the fire,
And charged at the side of Mura .”
And so did old Peter continue
His story of twenty brave years ;
His audience followed with comments—
Rude comments of curses and tears.

He told how the Prussians in vain
Had died in defence of their land ;
His audience laughed at the story,
And vowed that their captain was grand !
He had fought the red English, he said,
In many a battle of Spain ;
They cursed the red English, and prayed
To meet them and fight them again.

He told them how Russia was lost,
Had winter not driven them back ;

And his company cursed the quick frost,
And doubly they cursed the Cossack.
He told how the stranger arrived ;
They wept at the tale of disgrace ;
And they longed but for one battle more,
The stain of their shame to efface !

“ Our country their hordes overrun,
We fled to the fields of Champagne,
And fought them, though twenty to one,
And beat them again and again !
Our warrior was conquered at last ;
They bade him his crown to resign ;
To fate and his country he yielded
The rights of himself and his line.

“ He came, and among us he stood,
Around him we pressed in a throng,
We could not regard him for weeping,
Who had led us and loved us so long.
‘ I have led you for twenty long years,’
Napoleon said ere he went ;
‘ Wherever was honour I found you,
And with you, my sons, am content.

“ ‘ Though Europe against me was armed,
Your chiefs and my people are true ;
I still might have struggled with fortune,
And baffled all Europe with you.

“ ‘ But France would have suffered the while ;
’Tis best that I suffer alone :
I go to my place of exile,
To write of the deeds we have done.

“ ‘ Be true to the king that they give you ;
We may not embrace ere we part ;
But, General, reach me your hand,
And press me, I pray, to your heart.’

“ He called for our old battle standard ;
One kiss to the eagle he gave.
‘ Dear eagle !’ he said, ‘ may this kiss
Long sound in the hearts of the brave !’
’Twas thus that Napoleon left us ;
Our people were weeping and mute,
And he passed through the lines of his guard,
And our drums beat the notes of salute.

* * * *

“ I looked when the drumming was o’er,
I looked, but our hero was gone ;
We were destined to see him once more,
When we fought on the Mount of St. John.
The Emperor rode through our files ;
’Twas June, and a fair Sunday morn ;
The lines of our warriors for miles
Stretched wide through the Waterloo corn.

“ In thousands we stood on the plain ;
The red-coats were crowning the height ;
‘ Go scatter yon English,’ he said ;
‘ We’ll sup, lads, at Brussels to-night.’
We answered his voice with a shout ;
Our eagles were bright in the sun ;
Our drums and our cannon spoke out,
And the thundering battle begun.

“ One charge to another succeeds,
Like waves that a hurricane bears ;
All day do our galloping steeds
Dash fierce on the enemy’s squares.
At noon we began the fell onset ;
We charged up the Englishman’s hill ,
And madly we charged it at sunset—
His banners were floating there still.

“ —Go to ! I will tell you no more ;
You know how the battle was lost.
Ho ! fetch me a beaker of wine,
And, comrades, I’ll give you a toast.
I’ll give you a curse on all traitors,
Who plotted our Emperor’s ruin ;
And a curse on those red-coated English,
Whose bayonets helped our undoing.

“ A curse on those British assassins
Who ordered the slaughter of Ney ;
A curse on Sir Hudson, who tortured
The life of our hero away.
A curse on all Russians—I hate them—
On all Prussian and Austrian fry ;
And, O ! but I pray we may meet them,
And fight them again ere I die.”

’TWAS thus old Peter did conclude
His chronicle with curses fit.
He spoke the tale in accents rude,
In ruder verse I copied it.

Perhaps the tale a moral bears
(All tales in time to this must come),
The story of two hundred years
Writ on the parchment of a drum.

What Peter told with drum and stick,
Is endless theme for poet's pen :
Is found in endless quartos thick,
Enormous books by learned men.

And ever since historian writ,
And ever since a bard could sing,
Doth each exalt, with all his wit,
The noble art of murdering.

We love to read the glorious page,
How bold Achilles killed his foe,
And Turnus, felled by Trojans' rage,
Went howling to the shades below.

How Godfrey led his red-cross knights,
How mad Orlando slashed and slew ;
There's not a single bard that writes,
But doth the glorious theme renew.

And while in fashion picturesque,
The poet rhymes of blood and blows,
The grave historian, at his desk,
Describes the same in classic prose.

Go read the works of Reverend Cox ;
You'll duly see recorded there
The history of the self-same knocks
Here roughly sung by Drummer Pierre.

Of battles fierce and warriors big,
He writes in phrases dull and slow,
And waves his cauliflower wig,
And shouts, "Saint George for Marlborow!"

Take Doctor Southey from the shelf,
An LL. D.—a peaceful man;
Good Lord, how doth he plume himself
Because we beat the Corsican!

From first to last his page is filled
With stirring tales how blows were struck.
He shows how we the Frenchmen killed,
And praises God for our good luck.

Some hints, 'tis true, of politics
The doctors give, and statesman's art;
Pierre only bangs his drum and sticks,
And understands the bloody part.

He cares not what the cause may be,
He is not nice for wrong and right;
But show him where's the enemy,
He only asks to drum and fight.

'They bid him fight,—perhaps he wins;
And when he tells the story o'er,
The honest savage brags and grins,
And only longs to fight once more.

But luck may change, and valour fail,
Our drummer, Peter, meet reverse,
And with a moral points his tale—
The end of all such tales—a curse.

LAST year, my love, it was my hap
Behind a grenadier to be,
And, but he wore a hairy cap,
No taller man, methinks, than me.

Prince Albert and the Queen, God wot,
(Be blessings on the glorious pair !)
Before us passed, I saw them not,
I only saw a cap of hair.

Your orthodox historian puts
In foremost rank the soldier thus,
The red-coat bully in his boots,
That hides the march of men from us.

He puts him there in foremost rank,
You wonder at his cap of hair :
You hear his sabre's cursed clank,
His spurs are jingling everywhere.

Go to ! I hate him and his trade :
Who bade us so to cringe and bend,
And all God's peaceful people made
To such as him subservient ?

Tell me what find we to admire
In epaulets and scarlet coats,
In men because they load and fire,
And know the art of cutting throats ?

* * * * *

Ah, gentle, tender lady mine !
The winter wind blows cold and shrill,
Come, fill me one more glass of wine,
And give the silly fools their will.

And what care we for war and wrack,
How kings and heroes rise and fall ?
Look yonder ;* in his coffin black,
There lies the greatest of them all !

To pluck him down, and keep him up,
Died many million human souls ;
'Tis twelve o'clock, and time to sup,
Bid Mary heap the fire with coals.

He captured many thousand guns ;
He wrote "The Great" before his name ;
And dying, only left his sons
The recollection of his shame.

Though more than half the world was his,
He died without a rood his own ;
And borrowed from his enemies
Six foot of ground to lie upon.

He fought a thousand glorious wars,
And more than half the world was his,
And somewhere, now, in yonder stars,
Can tell, mayhap, what greatness is.

THE BALLAD OF BOUILLABAISSE

A STREET there is in Paris famous,
For which no rhyme our language yields,
Rue Neuve des petits Champs its name is—
The New Street of the Little Fields ;

* This ballad was written at Paris, at the time of the second funeral of Napoleon.

And here's an inn, not rich and splendid,
But still in comfortable case ;
The which in youth I oft attended,
To eat a bowl of Bouillabaisse.

This Bouillabaisse a noble dish is—
A sort of soup, or broth, or brew,
Or hotchpotch of all sorts of fishes,
That Greenwich never could outdo ;
Green herbs, red peppers, mussels, saffern,
Soles, onions, garlic, roach, and dace ;
All these you eat at Terré's tavern,
In that one dish of Bouillabaisse.

Indeed, a rich and savoury stew 'tis ;
And true philosophers, methinks,
Who love all sorts of natural beauties,
Should love good victuals and good drinks.
And Cordelier or Benedictine
Might gladly, sure, his lot embrace,
Nor find a fast-day too afflicting,
Which served him up a Bouillabaisse.

I wonder if the house still there is ?
Yes, here the lamp is, as before ;
The smiling, red-cheeked écaillère is
Still opening oysters at the door.
Is Terré still alive and able ?
I recollect his droll grimace ;
He'd come and smile before your table,
And hoped you liked your Bouillabaisse.

We enter ; nothing's changed or older.
“ How's Monsieur Terré, waiter, pray ? ”

The waiter stares and shrugs his shoulder ;—

“ Monsieur is dead this many a day.”

“ It is the lot of saint and sinner.

So honest Terré’s run his race ?”

“ What will Monsieur require for dinner ?”

“ Say, do you still cook Bouillabaisse ?”

“ Oh, oui, Monsieur,” ’s the waiter’s answer ;

“ Quel vin Monsieur désire-t-il ?”

“ Tell me a good one.” “ That I can, Sir ;

The Chambertin with yellow seal.”

“ So Terré’s gone,” I say, and sink in

My old accustomed corner-place ;

“ He’s done with feasting and with drinking,

With Burgundy and Bouillabaisse.”

My old accustomed corner here is,

The table still is in the nook ;

Ah ! vanished many a busy year is,

This well-known chair since last I took.

When first I saw ye, *Cari luoghi*,

I’d scarce a beard upon my face,

And now a grizzled, grim old fogy,

I sit and wait for Bouillabaisse.

Where are you, old companions trusty

Of early days, here met to dine ?

Come, waiter ! quick, a flagon crusty—

I’ll pledge them in the good old wine

The kind old voices and old faces

My memory can quick retrace ,

Around the board they take their places.

And share the wine and Bouillabaisse !

There's Jack has made a wondrous marriage ;
There's laughing Tom is laughing yet ;
There's brave Augustus drives his carriage ;
There's poor old Fred in the *Gazette* ;
On James's head the grass is growing :
Good Lord ! The world has wagged apace
Since here we set the Claret flowing,
And drank, and ate the Bouillabaisse.

Ah me ! how quick the days are flitting !
I mind me of a time that's gone,
When here I'd sit, as now I'm sitting,
In this same place—but not alone.
A fair young form was nestled near me,
A dear, dear face looked fondly up,
And sweetly spoke and smiled to cheer me
—There's no one now to share my cup.

* * * * *

I drink it as the Fates ordain it.
Come, fill it, and have done with rhymes ;
Fill up the lonely glass, and drain it
In memory of dear old times.
Welcome the wine, whate'er the seal is ;
And sit you down and say your grace
With thankful heart, whate'er the meal is.
—Here comes the smoking Bouillabaisse !

THE MAHOGANY-TREE.

CHRISTMAS is here;
Winds whistle shrill,
Icy and chill,
Little care we;
Little we fear
Weather without,
Sheltered about
The Mahogany-Tree.

Once on the boughs
Birds of rare plume
Sang, in its bloom;
Night-birds are we;
Here we carouse,
Singing, like them,
Perched round the stem
Of the jolly old tree.

Here let us sport,
Boys, as we sit;
Laughter and wit
Flashing so free.
Life is but short—
When we are gone,
Let them sing on,
Round the old tree.

Evenings we knew
Happy as this;
Faces we miss,
Pleasant to see.

Kind hearts and true,
Gentle and just,
Peace to your dust !
We sing round the tree.

Care, like a dun,
Lurks at the gate :
Let the dog wait ;
Happy we'll be !
Drink, every one ;
Pile up the coals,
Fill the red bowls,
Round the old tree !

Drain we the cup.—
Friend, art afraid ?
Spirits are laid
In the Red Sea.
Mantle it up ;
Empty it yet ;
Let us forget,
Round the old tree

Sorrows, begone !
Life and its ills,
Duns and their bills,
Bid we to flee.
Come with the dawn,
Blue-devil sprite,
Leave us to-night,
Round the old tree.

AT THE CHURCH GATE.

ALTHOUGH I enter not,
Yet round about the spot
Ofttimes I hover ;
And near the sacred gate,
With longing eyes I wait,
Expectant of her

The minster-bell tolls out
Above the city's rout,
And noise and humming ;
They've hushed the minster-bell :
The organ 'gins to swell ;
She's coming, she's coming !

My lady comes at last,
Timid and stepping fast,
And hastening hither,
With modest eyes downcast :
She comes—she's here, she's past—
May Heaven go with her !

Kneel undisturbed, fair saint !
Pour out your praise or plaint
Meekly and duly ;
I will not enter there,
To sully your pure prayer
With thoughts unruly.

But suffer me to pace
Round the forbidden place,
Linger a minute,

Like outcast spirits who wait
And see through Heaven's gate
Angels within it.

THE AGE OF WISDOM.

HO, pretty page, with the dimpled chin,
That never has known the barber's shear,
All your wish is woman to win,
This is the way that boys begin,—
Wait till you come to Forty Year.

Curly gold locks cover foolish brains,
Billing and cooing is all your cheer;
Sighing and singing of midnight strains,
Under Bonnybell's window panes,—
Wait till you come to Forty Year!

Forty times over let Michaelmas pass,
Grizzling hair the brain doth clear—
Then you know a boy is an ass,
Then you know the worth of a lass,
Once you have come to Forty Year.

Pledge me round, I bid ye declare,
All good fellows whose beards are gray,
Did not the fairest of the fair
Common grow and wearisome ere
Ever a month was passed away?

The reddest lips that ever have kissed,
The brightest eyes that ever have shone,

May pray and whisper, and we not list,
 Or look away, and never be missed,
 Ere yet ever a month is gone.

Gillian's dead, God rest her bier ;
 How I loved her twenty years syne !
 Marian's married, but I sit here
 Alone and merry at Forty Year,
 Dipping my nose in the Gascon wine

THE END OF THE PLAY.

THE play is done ; the curtain drops,
 Slow falling to the prompter's bell
 A moment yet the actor stops,
 And looks around, to say farewell.
 It is an irksome word and task ;
 And, when he's laughed and said his say,
 He shows, as he removes the mask,
 A face that's any thing but gay.

One word, ere yet the evening ends,
 Let's close it with a parting rhyme,
 And pledge a hand to all young friends,*
 As fits the merry Christmas time.
 On life's wide scene you, too, have parts,
 That Fate ere long shall bid you play ;
 Good-night ! with honest, gentle hearts
 A kindly greeting go alway !

* These verses were printed at the end of a Christmas Book (1848-49), "Dr. Birch and his Young Friends."

Good-night!—I'd say, the griefs, the joys,
 Just hinted in this mimic page,
 The triumphs and defeats of boys,
 Are but repeated in our age.
 I'd say, your woes were not less keen,
 Your hopes more vain than those of men;
 Your pangs or pleasures of fifteen
 At forty-five played o'er again.

I'd say, we suffer and we strive,
 Not less nor more as men than boys;
 With grizzled beards at forty-five,
 As erst at twelve in corduroys.
 And if, in time of sacred youth,
 We learned at home to love and pray,
 Pray Heaven that early Love and Truth
 May never wholly pass away.

And in the world, as in the school,
 I'd say, how fate may change and shift;
 The prize be sometimes with the fool,
 The race not always to the swift.
 The strong may yield, the good may fall,
 The great man be a vulgar clown,
 The knave be lifted over all,
 The kind cast pitilessly down.

Who knows the inscrutable design?
 Blessed be He who took and gave!
 Why should your mother, Charles, not mine,
 Be weeping at her darling's grave?*

* C. B. ob. 29th November, 1848, æt. 42.

We bow to Heaven that willed it so,
 That darkly rules the fate of all,
 That sends the respite or the blow,
 That's free to give, or to recall.

This crowns his feast with wine and wit ·
 Who brought him to that mirth and state ?
 His betters, see, below him sit,
 Or hunger hopeless at the gate.
 Who bade the mud from Dives' wheel
 To spurn the rags of Lazarus ?
 Come, brother, in that dust we'll kneel,
 Confessing Heaven that ruled it thus.

So each shall mourn, in life's advance,
 Dear hopes, dear friends, untimely killed ;
 Shall grieve for many a forfeit chance,
 And longing passion unfulfilled.
 Amen ! whatever fate be sent,
 Pray God the heart may kindly glow,
 Although the head with cares be bent,
 And whitened with the winter snow.

Come wealth or want, come good or ill,
 Let young and old accept their part,
 And bow before the Awful Will,
 And bear it with an honest heart.
 Who misses, or who wins the prize ?
 Go, lose or conquer as you can :
 But if you fail, or if you rise,
 Be each, pray God, a gentleman.

A gentleman, or old or young !
 (Bear kindly with my humble lays) ,

The sacred chorus first was sung
 Upon the first of Christmas days :
 The shepherds heard it overhead—
 The joyful angels raised it then :
 Glory to Heaven on high, it said,
 And peace on earth to gentle men.

My song, save this, is little worth ;
 I lay the weary pen aside,
 And wish you health, and love, and mirth,
 As fits the solemn Christmas-tide.
 As fits the holy Christmas birth,
 Be this, good friends, our carol still—
 Be peace on earth, be peace on earth,
 To men of gentle will.

William Edmondstoune Aytoun.

THE EXECUTION OF MONTROSE.

I.

COME hither, Evan Cameron !
 Come, stand beside my knee—
 I hear the river roaring down
 Towards the wintry sea.
 There's shouting on the mountain-side,
 There's war within the blast—
 Old faces look upon me,
 Old forms go trooping past.
 I hear the pibroch wailing
 Amidst the din of fight,

And my dim spirit wakes again
Upon the verge of night.

II.

'Twas I that led the Highland host
Through wild Lochaber's snows,
What time the plaided clans came down
To battle with Montrose.
I've told thee how the Southrons fell
Beneath the broad claymore,
And how we smote the Campbell clan
By Inverlochy's shore.
I've told thee how we swept Dundee,
And tamed the Lindsays' pride ;
But never have I told thee yet
How the great Marquis died.

III.

A traitor sold him to his foes ; -
O deed of deathless shame !
I charge thee, boy, if e'er thou meet
With one of Assynt's name—
Be it upon the mountain's side,
Or yet within the glen,
Stand he in martial gear alone,
Or backed by armèd men—
Face him, as thou wouldest face the man
Who wronged thy sire's renown ;
Remember of what blood thou art,
And strike the caitiff down !

IV.

They brought him to the Watergate,
Hard bound with hempen span,

As though they held a lion there,
 And not a fenceless man.
 They set him high upon a cart—
 The hangman rode below—
 They drew his hands behind his back,
 And bared his noble brow.
 Then, as a hound is slipped from leash,
 They cheered the common throng,
 And blew the note with yell and shout;
 And bade him pass along.

v.

It would have made a brave man's heart
 Grow sad and sick that day,
 To watch the keen malignant eyes
 Bent down on that array.
 There stood the Whig west-country lords
 In balcony and bow;
 There sat their gaunt and withered dames,
 And their daughters all a-row.
 And every open window
 Was full as full might be
 With black-robed Covenanting carles,
 That goodly sport to see !

vi.

But when he came, though pale and wan,
 He looked so great and high,
 So noble was his manly front,
 So calm his steadfast eye ;—

The rabble rout forbore to shout,
And each man held his breath,
For well they knew the hero's soul
Was face to face with death.
And then a mournful shudder
Through all the people crept,
And some that came to scoff at him
Now turned aside and wept.

VII.

But onwards—always onwards,
In silence and in gloom,
The dreary pageant laboured,
Till it reached the house of doom.
Then first a woman's voice was heard
In jeer and laughter loud,
And an angry cry and a hiss arose
From the heart of the tossing crowd :
Then, as the Graeme looked upwards,
He saw the ugly smile
Of him who sold his king for gold—
The master-fiend Argyle !

VIII.

The Marquis gazed a moment,
And nothing did he say,
But the cheek of Argyle grew ghastly pale,
And he turned his eyes away.
The painted harlot by his side,
She shook through every limb,
For a roar like thunder swept the street,
And hands were clinched at him ;

And a Saxon soldier cried aloud,
“ Back, coward, from thy place !
For seven long years thou hast not dared
To look him in the face.”

IX.

Had I been there with sword in hand,
And fifty Camerons by,
That day through high Dunedin's streets
Had pealed the slogan-cry.
Not all their troops of trampling horse,
Nor might of mailèd men—
Not all the rebels in the south
Had borne us backwards then !
Once more his foot on Highland heath
Had trod as free as air,
Or I, and all who bore my name,
Been laid around him there !

X.

It might not be. They placed him next
Within the solemn hall,
Where once the Scottish kings were throned
Amidst their nobles all.
But there was dust of vulgar feet
On that polluted floor,
And perjured traitors filled the place
Where good men sate before.
With savage glee came Warriston
To read the murderous doom ;
And then uprose the great Montrose
In the middle of the room.

XI.

“Now, by my faith as belted knight,
And by the name I bear,
And by the bright Saint Andrew’s cross
That waves above us there—
Yea, by a greater, mightier oath—
And oh, that such should be!—
By that dark stream of royal blood
That lies ’twixt you and me—
I have not sought in battle-field
A wreath of such renown,
Nor dared I hope on my dying day
To win the martyr’s crown !

XII.

“There is a chamber far away
Where sleep the good and brave,
But a better place ye have named for me
Than by my fathers’ grave.
For truth and right, ’gainst treason’s might.
This hand hath always striven,
And ye raise it up for a witness still
In the eye of earth and heaven.
Then nail my head on yonder tower—
Give every town a limb—
And God who made shall gather them:
I go from you to Him !”

XIII.

The morning dawned full darkly
The rain came flashing down,

And the jagged streak of the levin-bolt
 Lit up the gloomy town :
 The thunder crashed across the heaven,
 The fatal hour was come ;
 Yet aye broke in, with muffled beat,
 The 'larum of the drum.
 There was madness on the earth below
 And anger in the sky,
 And young and old, and rich and poor,
 Came forth to see him die.

xiv.

Ah, God ! that ghastly gibbet !
 How dismal 'tis to see
 The great tall spectral skeleton,
 The ladder and the tree !
 Hark ! hark ! it is the clash of arms—
 The bells begin to toll—
 “ He is coming ! he is coming !
 God's mercy on his soul ! ”
 One last long peal of thunder—
 The clouds are cleared away,
 And the glorious sun once more looks down
 Amidst the dazzling day.

xv.

“ He is coming ! he is coming ! ”
 Like a bridegroom from his room,
 Came the hero from his prison
 To the scaffold and the doom.
 There was glory on his forehead,
 There was lustre in his eye,

And he never walked to battle
More proudly than to die;
There was colour in his visage,
Though the cheeks of all were wan,
And they marvelled as they saw him pass,
That great and goodly man!

xvi.

He mounted up the scaffold,
And he turned him to the crowd;
But they dared not trust the people,
So he might not speak aloud.
But he looked upon the heavens,
And they were clear and blue,
And in the liquid ether
The eye of God shone through:
Yet a black and murky battlement
Lay resting on the hill,
As though the thunder slept within—
All else was calm and still.

xvii.

The grim Geneva ministers
With anxious scowl drew near,
As you have seen the ravens flock
Around the dying deer.
He would not deign them word nor sign,
But alone he bent the knee;
And veiled his face for Christ's dear grace
Beneath the gallows-tree.
Then radiant and serene he rose,
And cast his cloak away:

For he had ta'en his latest look
Of earth and sun and day.

XVIII.

A beam of light fell o'er him,
Like a glory round the shriven,
And he climbed the lofty ladder
As it were the path to heaven.
Then came a flash from out the cloud,
And a stunning thunder-roll ;
And no man dared to look aloft,
For fear was on every soul.
There was another heavy sound,
A hush and then a groan ;
And darkness swept across the sky—
The work of death was done !

THE HEART OF THE BRUCE.

I.

IT was upon an April morn,
While yet the frost lay hoar,
We heard Lord James's bugle-horn
Sound by the rocky shore.

II.

Then down we went, a hundred knights,
All in our dark array,
And flung our armour in the ships
That rode within the bay.

III.

We spoke not as the shore grew less,
 But gazed in silence back,
 Where the long billows swept away
 The foam behind our track.

IV.

And aye the purple hues decayed
 Upon the fading hill,
 And but one heart in all that ship
 Was tranquil, cold, and still.

V.

The good Lord Douglas paced the deck,
 And oh, his face was wan !
 Unlike the flush it used to wear
 When in the battle-van.—

VI.

“ Come hither, come hither, my trusty knight,
 Sir Simon of the Lee ;
 There is a freit lies near my soul
 I fain would tell to thee.

VII.

“ Thou know’st the words King Robert spoke
 Upon his dying day :
 How he bade me take his noble heart
 And carry it far away ;

VIII.

“ And lay it in the holy soil
 Where once the Saviour trod,
 Since he might not bear the blessed Cross,
 Nor strike one blow for God.

IX.

“ Last night as in my bed I lay,
 I dreamed a dreary dream :—
 Methought I saw a Pilgrim stand
 In the moonlight’s quivering beam.

X.

“ His robe was of the azure dye,
 Snow white his scattered hairs,
 And even such a cross he bore
 As good Saint Andrew bears.

XI.

“ ‘ Why go ye forth, Lord James,’ he said,
 ‘ With spear and belted brand ?
 Why do you take its dearest pledge
 From this our Scottish land ?

XII.

“ ‘ The sultry breeze of Galilee
 Creeps through its groves of palm,
 The olives on the Holy Mount
 Stand glittering in the calm.

XIII.

“ ‘ But ’tis not there that Scotland’s heart
 Shall rest by God’s decree,
 Till the great angel calls the dead
 To rise from earth and sea !

XIV.

“ ‘ Lord James of Douglas, mark my rede !
 That heart shall pass once more
 In fiery fight against the foe,
 As it was wont of yore.

XV.

“ ‘ And it shall pass beneath the Cross,
 And save King Robert’s vow ;
 But other hands shall bear it back,
 Not, James of Douglas, thou !’

XVI.

“ Now, by thy knightly faith, I pray,
 Sir Simon of the Lee—
 For truer friend had never man
 Than thou hast been to me—

XVII.

“ If ne’er upon the Holy Land
 ’Tis mine in life to tread,
 Bear thou to Scotland’s kindly earth
 The relics of her dead.”

XVIII.

The tear was in Sir Simon’s eye
 As he wrung the warrior’s hand—
 “ Betide me weal, betide me woe,
 I’ll hold by thy command.

XIX.

“ But if in battle-front, Lord James,
 ’Tis ours once more to ride,
 Nor force of man, nor craft of fiend,
 Shall cleave me from thy side !”

XX.

And aye we sailed, and aye we sailed,
 Across the weary sea,
 Until one morn the coast of Spain
 Rose grimly on our lee.

XXI.

And as we rounded to the port,
 Beneath the watch-tower's wall,
 We heard the clash of the atabals,
 And the trumpet's wavering call.

XXII.

“ Why sounds yon Eastern music here
 So wantonly and long,
 And whose the crowd of armèd men
 That round yon standard throng ? ”

XXIII.

“ The Moors have come from Africa
 To spoil and waste and slay,
 And King Alonzo of Castile
 Must fight with them to-day.”

XXIV.

“ Now shame it were,” cried good Lord James,
 “ Shall never be said of me,
 That I and mine have turned aside
 From the Cross in jeopardie !

XXV.

“ Have down, have down, my merry men all—
 Have down unto the plain ;
 We'll let the Scottish lion loose
 Within the fields of Spain ! ”

XXVI.

“ Now welcome to me, noble lord,
 Thou and thy stalwart power ;
 Dear is the sight of a Christian knight,
 Who comes in such an hour !

XXVII.

“ Is it for bond or faith you come,
 Or yet for golden fee ?
 Or bring ye France’s lilies here,
 Or the flower of Burgundie ? ”

XXVIII.

“ God greet thee well, thou valiant King,
 Thee and thy belted peers—
 Sir James of Douglas am I called,
 And these are Scottish spears.

XXIX.

“ We do not fight for bond or plight,
 Nor yet for golden fee ;
 But for the sake of our blessed Lord,
 Who died upon the tree.

XXX.

“ We bring our great King Robert’s heart
 Across the weltering wave,
 To lay it in the holy soil
 Hard by the Saviour’s grave.

XXXI.

“ True pilgrims we, by land or sea,
 Where danger bars the way ;
 And therefore are we here, Lord King,
 To ride with thee this day ! ”

XXXII.

The King has bent his stately head,
 And the tears were in his eyne—
 “ God’s blessing on thee, noble knight,
 For this brave thought of thine ! ”

XXXIII.

“ I know thy name full well, Lord James ;
 And honoured may I be,
 That those who fought beside the Bruce
 Should fight this day for me ! ”

XXXIV.

“ Take thou the leading of the van,
 And charge the Moors amain ;
 There is not such a lance as thine
 In all the host of Spain ! ”

XXXV.

The Douglas turned towards us then,
 Oh but his glance was high ! —
 “ There is not one of all my men
 But is as bold as I. ”

XXXVI.

“ There is not one of all my knights
 But bears as true a spear —
 Then onward, Scottish gentlemen,
 And think King Robert’s here ! ”

XXXVII.

The trumpets blew, the cross-bolts flew,
 The arrows flashed like flame,
 As spur in side, and spear in rest,
 Against the foe we came.

XXXVIII.

And many a bearded Saracen
 Went down, both horse and man ;
 For through their ranks we rode like corn,
 So furiously we ran !

XXXIX.

But in behind our path they closed,
Though fain to let us through,
For they were forty thousand men,
And we were wondrous few.

XL.

We might not see a lance's length,
So dense was their array,
But the long fell sweep of the Scottish blade
Still held them hard at bay.

XLI.

“ Make in ! make in !” Lord Douglas cried—
“ Make in, my brethren dear !
Sir William of Saint Clair is down ;
We may not leave him here !”

XLII.

But thicker, thicker grew the swarm,
And sharper shot the rain,
And the horses reared amid the press,
But they would not charge again.

XLIII.

“ Now Jesu help thee,” said Lord James,
“ Thou kind and true St. Clair !
An’ if I may not bring thee off,
I’ll die beside thee there !”

XLIV.

Then in his stirrups up he stood,
So lion-like and bold,
And held the precious heart aloft
All in its case of gold.

XLV.

He flung it from him, far ahead.
 And never spake he more,
 But—"Pass thee first, thou dauntless heart,
 As thou wert wont of yore!"

XLVI.

The roar of fight rose fiercer yet,
 And heavier still the stour,
 Till the spears of Spain came shivering in,
 And swept away the Moor.

XLVII.

"Now praised be God, the day is won!
 They fly o'er flood and fell—
 Why dost thou draw the rein so hard,
 Good knight, that fought so well?"

XLVIII.

"Oh, ride ye on, Lord King!" he said,
 "And leave the dead to me,
 For I must keep the dreariest watch
 That ever I shall dree!"

XLIX.

"There lies, above his master's heart,
 The Douglas, stark and grim;
 And woe is me I should be here,
 Not side by side with him!"

L.

"The world grows cold, my arm is old,
 And thin my lyart hair,
 And all that I loved best on earth
 Is stretched before me there.

LI.

“ O Bothwell banks ! that bloom so bright
 Beneath the sun of May,
 The heaviest cloud that ever blew
 Is bound for you this day.

LII.

“ And Scotland ! thou mayst veil thy head
 In sorrow and in pain :
 The sorest stroke upon thy brow
 Hath fallen this day in Spain !

LIII.

“ We'll bear them back unto our ship,
 We'll bear them o'er the sea,
 And lay them in the hallowed earth,
 Within our own countrie.

LIV.

“ And be thou strong of heart, Lord King,
 For this I tell thee sure,
 The sod that drank the Douglas' blood
 Shall never bear the Moor !”

LV.

The King he lighted from his horse,
 He flung his brand away,
 And took the Douglas by the hand,
 So stately as he lay.

LVI.

“ God give thee rest, thou valiant soul !
 That fought so well for Spain ;
 I'd rather half my land were gone,
 So thou wert here again !”

LVII.

We bore the good Lord James away,
And the priceless heart we bore,
And heavily we steered our ship
Towards the Scottish shore.

LVIII.

No welcome greeted our return,
Nor clang of martial tread,
But all were dumb and hushed as death
Before the mighty dead.

LIX.

We laid our chief in Douglas Kirk,
The heart in fair Melrose ;
And woful men were we that day—
God grant their souls repose !

George W. Thornbury.

THE THREE TROOPERS.

(DURING THE PROTECTORATE.)

INTO the Devil tavern
Three booted troopers strode,
From spur to feather spotted and splashed
With the mud of a winter road.
In each of their cups they dropped a crust,
And stared at the guests with a frown ;
Then drew their swords, and roared for a toast,
“ God send this Crum-well-down !”

A blue smoke rose from their pistol-locks,
Their sword-blades were still wet;
There were long red smears on their jerkins of buff,
As the table they overset.
Then into their cups they stirred the crusts,
And cursed old London town;
Then waved their swords, and drank with a stamp,
“ God send this Crum-well-down !”

The 'prentice dropped his can of beer,
The host turned pale as a clout;
The ruby nose of the toping squires
Grew white at the wild men's shout.
Then into their cups they flung the crusts,
And showed their teeth with a frown;
They flashed their swords as they gave the toast,
“ God send this Crum-well-down !”

The gambler dropped his dog's-eared cards,
The waiting-women screamed,
As the light of the fire, like stains of blood,
On the wild men's sabres gleamed.
Then into their cups they splashed the crusts,
And cursed the fool of a town,
And leaped on the table, and roared a toast,
“ God send this Crum-well-down !”

Till on a sudden fire-bells rang,
And the troopers sprang to horse;
The eldest muttered between his teeth,
Hot curses—deep and coarse.
In their stirrup-cups they flung the crusts,
And cried as they spurred through town,

With their keen swords drawn and their pistols cocked,
“ God send this Crum-well-down !”

Away they dashed through Temple Bar,
Their red cloaks flowing free,
Their scabbards clashed, each back-piece shone—
None liked to touch the three.
The silver cups that held the crusts
They flung to the startled town,
Shouting again, with a blaze of swords,
“ God send this Crum-well-down !”

THE WHITE ROSE OVER THE WATER

(EDINBURGH.—1744.)

THE old men sat with hats pulled down,
Their claret cups before them :
Broad shadows hid their sullen eyes,
The tavern lamps shone o'er them,
As a brimming bowl, with crystal filled,
Came borne by the landlord's daughter,
Who wore in her bosom the fair white rose
That grew best over the water.

Then all leaped up, and joined their hands
With hearty clasp and greeting,
The brimming cups, outstretched by all,
Over the wide bowl meeting.
“ A health,” they cried, “ to the witching eyes
Of Kate, the landlord's daughter !

But don't forget the white, white rose
That grows best over the water."

Each others' cups they touched all round,
The last red drop outpouring;
Then with a cry that warmed the blood,
One heart-born chorus roaring—
" Let the glass go round to pretty Kate,
The landlord's black-eyed daughter,
But never forget the white, white rose
That grows best over the water."

Then hats flew up and swords sprang out,
And lusty rang the chorus—
" Never," they cried, " while Scots are Scots,
And the broad Frith's before us."
A ruby ring the glasses shine
As they toast the landlord's daughter,
Because she wore the white, white rose
That grew best over the water.

A poet cried, " Our thistle's brave,
With all its stings and prickles;
The shamrock with its holy leaf
Is spared by Irish sickles.
But bumpers round, for what are these
To Kate, the landlord's daughter,
Who wears at her bosom the rose so white,
That grows best over the water?"

They dashed the glasses at the wall.
No lip might touch them after;
The toast had sanctified the cups
That smashed against the rafter;

Then chairs thrown back, they up again,
 To toast the landlord's daughter,
 But never forgot the white, white rose
 That grew best over the water.

LA TRICOTEUSE.

THE fourteenth of July had come,
 And round the guillotine
 The thieves and beggars, rank by rank,
 Moved the red flags between.
 A crimson heart, upon a pole,—
 The long march had begun ;
 But still the little smiling child
 Sat knitting in the sun.

The red caps of those men of France
 Shook like a poppy-field ;
 Three women's heads, with gory hair,
 The standard-bearers wield.
 Cursing, with song and battle-hymn,
 Five butchers dragged a gun ;
 Yet still the little maid sat there,
 A-knitting in the sun.

An axe was painted on the flags,
 A broken throne and crown,
 A ragged coat, upon a lance,
 Hung in foul black shreds down.
 “ More heads ! ” the seething rabble cry
 And now the drum's begun ;

But still the little fair-haired child
Sat knitting in the sun.

And every time a head rolled off,
They roll like winter seas,
And, with a tossing up of caps,
Shouts shook the Tuileries.
Whizz—went the heavy chopper down,
And then the drums begun ;
But still the little smiling child
Sat knitting in the sun.

The Jacobins, ten thousand strong,
And every man a sword ;
The red caps, with the tricolors,
Led on the noisy horde.
“ The *Sans Culottes* to-day are strong,”
The gossips say, and run ;
But still the little maid sits there
A-knitting in the sun.

Then the slow death-cart moved along ;
And, singing patriot songs,
A pale, doomed poet bowing comes
And cheers the swaying throng.
O when the axe swept shining down,
The mad drums all begun ;
But, smiling still, the little child
Sat knitting in the sun.

“ Le marquis’ ”—linen snowy white
The powder in his hair,
Waving his scented handkerchief,
Looks down with careless stare

A whirr, a chop—another head—
 Hurrah ! the work's begun ;
 But still the little child sat there
 A-knitting in the sun.

A stir, and through the parting crowd,
 The people's friends are come ;
 Marat and Robespierre—“ Vivat !
 Roll thunder from the drum.”
 The one a wild beast's hungry eye,
 Hair tangled—hark ! a gun !—
 The other kindly kissed the child
 A-knitting in the sun.

“ And why not work all night ? ” the child
 Said, to the knitters there.
 O how the furies shook their sides,
 And tossed their grizzled hair !
 Then clapped a *bonnet rouge* on her,
 And cried—“ ’Tis well begun ! ”
 And laughed to see the little child
 Knit, smiling, in the sun.

THE OLD GRENADEUR'S STORY

(TOLD ON A BENCH OUTSIDE THE INVALIDES.)

TWAS the day beside the Pyramids,
 It seems but an hour ago,
 That Kleber's Foot stood firm in squares,
 Returning blow for blow.
 The Mamelukes were tossing
 Their standards to the sky,

When I heard a child's voice say, " My men,
Teach me the way to die !"

'Twas a little drummer, with his side
 Torn terribly with shot ;
But still he feebly beat his drum,
 As though the wound were not.
And when the Mameluke's wild horse
 Burst with a scream and cry,
He said, " O men of the Forty-third,
Teach me the way to die !"

" My mother has got other sons,
 With stouter hearts than mine,
But none more ready blood for France
 To pour out free as wine.
Yet still life's sweet," the brave lad moaned,
 " Fair are this earth and sky ;
Then, comrades of the Forty-third,
Teach me the way to die !"

I saw Salenche, of the granite heart,
 Wiping his burning eyes—
It was by far more pitiful
 Than mere loud sobs and cries.
One bit his cartridge till his lip
 Grew black as winter sky,
But still the boy moaned, " Forty-third,
Teach me the way to die !"

O never saw I sight like that !
 The sergeant flung down flag,
Even the fifer bound his brow
 With a wet and bloody rag ;

Then looked at locks, and fixed their steel,
But never made reply,
Until he sobbed out once again,
“ *Teach me the way to die!*”

Then, with a shout that flew to God,
They strode into the fray ;
I saw their red plumes join and wave,
But slowly melt away.
The last who went—a wounded man—
Bade the poor boy good-by,
And said, “ We men of the Forty-third
Teach you the way to die!”

I never saw so sad a look
As the poor youngster cast,
When the hot smoke of cannon
In cloud and whirlwind passed.
Earth shook, and Heaven answered :
I watched his eagle eye,
As he faintly moaned, “ The Forty-third
Teach me the way to die!”

Then, with a musket for a crutch,
He limped unto the fight ;
I, with a bullet in my hip,
Had neither strength nor might.
But, proudly beating on his drum,
A fever in his eye,
I heard him moan, “ The Forty-third
Taught me the way to die!”

They found him on the morrow,
Stretched on a heap of dead ;

His hand was in the grenadier's
 Who at his bidding bled.
 They hung a medal round his neck,
 And closed his dauntless eye ;
 On the stone they cut, " The Forty-third
Taught him the way to die !"

'Tis forty years from then till now—
 The grave gapes at my feet—
 Yet, when I think of such a boy,
 I feel my old heart beat.
 And from my sleep I sometimes wake,
 Hearing a feeble cry,
 And a voice that says, " Now, Forty-third,
Teach me the way to die !"

George Meredith.

WILL O' THE WISP.

FOllow me, follow me,
 Over brake and under tree,
 Through the bosky tanglery,
 Brushwood and bramb'le.
 Follow me, follow me,
 Laugh and leap and scramble !
 Follow, follow,
 Hill and hollow,
 Fosse and burrow,
 Fen and furrow,

Down into the bulrush-beds,
Midst the reeds and osier-heads,
In the rushy, soaking damps,
Where the vapours pitch their camps,

Follow me, follow me,

For a midnight ramble !

Oh, what a mighty fog !
What a merry night O ho !

Follow, follow, nigher, nigher—
Over bank, and pond, and brier,
Down into the croaking ditches,

Rotten log,

Spotted frog,

Beetle bright

With crawling light,

What a joy O ho !

Deep into the purple bog—

What a joy O ho !

Where like hosts of puckered witches

All the shivering agues sit,

Warming hands and chafing feet,

By the blue marsh-hovering oils :

O the fools for all their moans !

Not a forest mad with fire

Could still their teeth, or warm their bones,

Or loose them from their chilly coils.

What a clatter !

How they chatter !

Shrink and huddle,

All a muddle,

What a joy O ho !

Down we go, down we go,

What a joy O ho !

Soon shall I be down below,
Plunging with a gray fat friar,
Hither, thither, to and fro,
 What a joy O ho !
Breathing mists and whisking lamps,
Plashing in the slimy swamps ;
 What a joy O ho !

While my cousin Lantern Jack,
With cock ears and cunning eyes,
Turns him round upon his back,
Daubs him oozy green and black,
Sits upon his rolling size,
Where he lies, where he lies,
Groaning full of sack—
Staring with his great round eyes !

 What a joy O ho !
Sits upon him in the swamps,
Breathing mists and whisking lamps !

 What a joy O ho !
Such a lad is Lantern Jack,
When he rides the black nightmare
Through the fens, and puts a glare
In the friar's track.

Such a frolic lad, good lack !
To turn a friar on his back,
Trip him, clip him, whip him, nip him,
Lay him sprawling, smack !
Such a lad is Lantern Jack !
Such a tricksy lad, good lack !

 What a joy O ho !
Follow me, follow me,
Where he sits, and you shall see !

LOVE IN THE VALLEY.

UNDER yonder beech-tree standing on the green sward,
Couched with her arms behind her little head,
Her knees folded up, and her tresses on her bosom,
Lies my young love sleeping in the shade.
Had I the heart to slide one arm beneath her !
Press her dreaming lips as her waist I folded slow,
Waking on the instant she could not but embrace me—
Ah ! would she hold me, and never let me go ?

Shy as the squirrel, and wayward as the swallow ;
Swift as the swallow when athwart the western flood
Circling the surface he meets his mirrored winglets,—
Is that dear one in her maiden bud.
Shy as the squirrel whose nest is in the pine-tops ;
Gentle—ah ! that she were jealous as the dove !
Full of all the wildness of the woodland creatures,
Happy in herself is the maiden that I love !

What can have taught her distrust of all I tell her ?
Can she truly doubt me when looking on my brows ?
Nature never teaches distrust of tender love-tales,
What can have taught her distrust of all my vows ?
No, she does not doubt me ! on a dewy eve-tide,
Whispering together beneath the listening moon,
I prayed till her cheek flushed, implored till she faltered—
Fluttered to my bosom—ah ! to fly away so soon !

When her mother tends her before the laughing mirror,
Tying up her laces, looping up her hair,
Often she thinks, “ Were this wild thing wedded,
I should have more love, and much less care.”

When her mother tends her before the bashful mirror,
Loosening her laces, combing down her curls,
Often she thinks, " Were this wild thing wedded,
I should lose but one for so many boys and girls."

Clambering roses peep into her chamber,
Jasmine and woodbine breathe sweet, sweet ;
White-necked swallows twittering of summer,
Fill her with balm and nested peace from head to feet.
Ah ! will the rose-bough see her lying lonely,
When the petals fall and fierce bloom is on the leaves ?
Will the Autumn garners see her still ungathered,
When the fickle swallows forsake the weeping eaves ?

Comes a sudden question—should a strange hand pluck her !
Oh, what an anguish smites me at the thought,
Should some idle lordling bribe her mind with jewels !—
Can such beauty ever thus be bought ?
Sometimes the huntsmen prancing down the valley
Eye the village lasses, full of sprightly mirth ;
They see as I see, mine is the fairest !
Would she were older, and could read my worth !

Are there not sweet maidens if she still deny me ?
Show the bridal heavens but one bright star ?
Wherefore thus then do I chase a shadow,
Clattering one note like a brown eve-jar ?
So I rhyme and reason till she darts before me—
Through the milky meadows from flower to flower she
flies,
Sunning her sweet palms to shade her dazzled eyelids
From the golden love that looks too eager in her eyes.

When at dawn she wakens, and her fair face gazes
Out on the weather through the window-panes,
Beauteous she looks ! like a white water-lily
Bursting out of bud on the rippled river-plains.
When from bed she rises, clothed from neck to ankle
In her long night-gown, sweet as boughs of May,
Beauteous she looks ! like a tall garden lily
Pure from the night and perfect for the day !

Happy, happy time, when the gray star twinkles
Over the fields all fresh with bloomy dew ;
When the cold-cheeked dawn grows ruddy up the twilight,
And the gold sun wakes, and weds her in the blue.
Then when my darling tempts the early breezes,
She the only star that dies not with the dark !
Powerless to speak all the ardour of my passion,
I catch her little hand as we listen to the lark.

Shall the birds in vain then valentine their sweethearts ?
Season after season tell a fruitless tale ;
Will not the virgin listen to their voices ?
Take the honeyed meaning—wear the bridal veil.
Fears she frosts of winter, fears she the bare branches ?
Waits she the garlands of Spring for her dower ?
Is she a nightingale that will not be nested
Till the April woodland has built her bridal bower ?

Then come, merry April, with all thy birds and beauties !
With thy crescent brows and thy flowery, showery glee ;
With thy budding leafage and fresh green pastures ;
And may thy lustrous crescent grow a honeymoon for
me !

Come, merry month of the cuckoo and the violet !

Come, weeping Loveliness, in all thy blue delight !

Lo ! the nest is ready, let me not languish longer !

Bring her to my arms on the first May night.

W. C. Bennett.

BABY MAY.

CHEEKS as soft as July peaches ;
Lips whose dewy scarlet teaches
Poppies paleness ; round large eyes
Ever great with new surprise ;
Minutes filled with shadeless gladness ;
Minutes just as brimmed with sadness ;
Happy smiles and wailing cries ;
Crows and laughs and tearful eyes ;
Lights and shadows, swifter born
Than on wind-swept Autumn corn ;
Ever some new tiny notion,
Making every limb all motion ;
Catching up of legs and arms ;
Throwings back and small alarms ;
Clutching fingers ; straightening jerks ;
Twining feet whose each toe works ;
Kickings up and straining risings ;
Mother's ever new surprisings ;
Hands all wants and looks all wonder
At all things the heavens under ;
Tiny scorns of smiled reprovings
That have more of love than lovings ;

Mischiefs done with such a winning
 Archness that we prize such sinning ;
 Breakings dire of plates and glasses ;
 Graspings small at all that passes ;
 Pullings off of all that's able
 To be caught from tray or table ;
 Silences—small meditations
 Deep as thoughts of cares for nations ;
 Breaking into wisest speeches
 In a tongue that nothing teaches ;
 All the thoughts of whose possessing
 Must be wooed to light by guessing ;
 Slumbers—such sweet angel-seemings
 That we'd ever have such dreamings ,
 Till from sleep we see thee breaking ,
 And we'd always have thee waking ;
 Wealth for which we know no measure ;
 Pleasure high above all pleasure ;
 Gladness brimming over gladness ,
 Joy in care ; delight in sadness ;
 Loveliness beyond completeness ;
 Sweetness distancing all sweetness ;
 Beauty all that beauty may be ;—
 That's May Bennett ; that's my baby .

 SPRING SONGS.

I.

NOW do tawny bees along,
 Plundering sweets from blossoms, hum ;
 Now do showers of joyous song
 Down from larks up-mounting, come ;

Every thing
Now doth sing,
Welcome gladness, welcome Spring.

Now above and all around
Songs are thronging earth and air ;
Joy is loud in every sound,
Every sound is mocking care.

Every thing
Now doth sing,
Welcome gladness, welcome Spring.

Now is every hawthorn-bough
Burdened with its wealth of May,
Glistening runs each streamlet now,
Gambolling through the golden day.

Fount and spring,
Hark ! they sing,
Welcome sunshine, welcome Spring.

Now do golden lizards lie,
Sunning them on wayside banks ;
Now with flowers of many a dye
Spring the woods and meadows pranks.
What say they ?
This they say,
Welcome gladness, welcome May.

Now do those, in joy that walk
Shadowed wood and checkered lane,
Stay their steps and hush their talk,
'Till the cuckoo call again ;

Till anew,
Hush—cuckoo,
Hark ! it comes the wood-depths through.

Now the woods are stirred with eyes ;
Now their weeds and mosses through,
Peep the white anemones,
Daisies pied and violets blue.
Flowers, they spring,
Birds, they sing,
All to swell the pomp of Spring.

Now in poets' songs 'tis told
How, in vales of Arcady,
Once men knew an age of gold,
Once the earth seemed heaven to be ;
Hark ! they sing,
Years, ye bring
Golden times again with Spring.

II.

Now the fields are full of flowers ;
Now in every country lane,
Making mirth and gladness ours,
Wild-flowers nod and blush again ;
Now they stain
Heath and lane,
Longed-for lost ones come again.

Now the mower, on his scythe
Leaning, wipes his furrowed brow
Many a song the milkmaid blithe
Carols through the morning now ;

Clear and strong
Goes her song
With the clanking pail along.

Blithely lusty Roger now
Through the furrows plods along,
Singing to the creaking plough
Many a quaint old country song ;
Morning rings,
As he sings,
With the praise of other Springs.

Children now in every school
Wish away the weary hours ;
Doubly now they feel the rule
Barring them from buds and flowers ;
How they shout,
Bounding out,
Lanes and fields to race about !

Now with shrill and wondering shout,
As some new-found prize they pull,
Prattlers range the fields about,
Till their laps with flowers are full ;
Seated round
On the ground,
Now they sort the wonders found.

Now do those in cities pent,
Labouring life away, confess,
Spite of all, that life was meant
One to be with happiness ;

Hark ! they sing,
 Pleasant Spring
 Joy to all was meant to bring.
 Poets now in sunshine dream ;
 Now their eyes such visions see
 That the golden ages seem
 'Times that yet again might be.
 Hark ! they sing,
 Years shall bring
 Golden ages—endless Spring.

FROM SEA.

O IT was not for my mother,
 Though dear she is to me,
 Though old she is, and poor she is,
 That I sailed the stormy sea !
 But it was for my true-love,
 That dearer is to me
 Than father and than mother both,
 'Twas for her I sailed the sea.

The wind blows fair and freshly,
 Right fresh for Harwich Bay,
 For the cottage on its sandy cliff,
 That I think of night and day ;
 That I think of, and I dream of,
 And have dreamt of night and day,
 In calm and storm, and south the line,
 A thousand leagues away.

Now, watch, look out to leeward !
 The land must sure be near.



FROM SEA.

There looms the cape through the morning mist,
That I've longed to see appear ;
To see it rising from the waves,
For it shields the quiet bay,
Upon whose cliffs the cottage stands
That I've prayed for far away.

Now, men, the sails be furling !
Now let the anchor go !
At our brown ship's side let our best boat ride,
And the oars be shipped below ;
And while the rope you're casting off,
Take in my chest and me ;
Now farewell, blustering captain,
And farewell, roaring sea !

Now pull—pull with a will, boys,
And beach right high the boat ;
For dear, dear is the land to me
That have tossed so long afloat ;
And dear, dear is the girl to me,
With each breath loved more and more—
Yon girl whose brown hand shades her eyes,
To see us pull ashore.

She shades her eyes a moment—
O that the beach were near !
Does she see my torn hat waving ?
Does she catch my cry from here ?
Yes ; down the cliff she's flying ;
Pull—pull, my men, for life,
That I may kiss again my girl,
My bonny, bonny wife !

Thomas Westwood.

LITTLE BELL.

“He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.”

The Ancient Mariner.

PIPED the Blackbird, on the beechwood spray,
“Pretty maid, slow wandering this way,
What’s your name?” quoth he.
“What’s your name? Oh! stop and straight unfold,
Pretty maid, with showery curls of gold.”
“Little Bell,” said she.

Little Bell sat down beneath the rocks,
Tossed aside her gleaming, golden locks,—
“Bonny bird!” quoth she,
“Sing me your best song, before I go.”
“Here’s the very finest song I know,
Little Bell,” said he.

And the Blackbird piped—you never heard
Half so gay a song from any bird;
Full of quips and wiles,
Now so round and rich, now soft and slow,
All for love of that sweet face below,
Dimpled o’er with smiles.

And the while that bonny bird did pour
His full heart out, freely, o’er and o’er,
'Neath the morning skies,
In the little childish heart below,

All the sweetness seemed to grow and grow,
And shine forth in happy overflow
From the brown, bright eyes.

Down the dell she tripped, and through the glade—
Peeped the squirrel from the hazel-shade,
And, from out the tree,
Swung and leaped and frolicked, void of fear,
While bold Blackbird piped, that all might hear,
“Little Bell!” piped he.

Little Bell sat down amid the fern :
“Squirrel, Squirrel ! to your task return
Bring me nuts !” quoth she.
Up, away ! the frisky Squirrel hies,
Golden wood-lights glancing in his eyes,
And adown the tree,
Great ripe nuts, kissed brown by July sun,
In the little lap drop, one by one—
Hark ! how Blackbird pipes, to see the fun !
“Happy Bell!” pipes he.

Little Bell looked up and down the glade :
“Squirrel, Squirrel, from the nut-tree shade,
Bonny Blackbird, if you’re not afraid,
Come and share with me !”
Down came Squirrel, eager for his fare,
Down came bonny Blackbird, I declare ;
Little Bell gave each his honest share—
Ah ! the merry three !

And the while those frolic playmates twain
Piped and frisked from bough to bough again,
’Neath the morning skies,

In the little childish heart below,
 All the sweetness seemed to grow and grow,
 And shine out in happy overflow,
 From her brown, bright eyes.

By her snow-white cot, at close of day,
 Knelt sweet Bell, with folded palms, to pray.
 Very calm and clear
 Rose the praying voice, to where, unseen,
 In blue heaven, an angel-shape serene
 Paused awhile to hear.

“ What good child is this,” the angel said,
 “ That, with happy heart, beside her bed,
 Prays so lovingly ? ”
 Low and soft, oh ! very low and soft,
 Crooned the Blackbird in the orchard croft,
 “ Bell, *dear Bell !* ” crooned he.
 “ Whom God’s creatures love,” the angel fair
 Murmured, “ God doth bless with angels’ care ;
 Child, thy bed shall be
 Folded safe from harm ; love, deep and kind,
 Shall watch round and leave good gifts behind,
 Little Bell, for thee.”

THE MOORLAND CHILD.

UPON the bleak and barren moor
 I met a wandering child ;
 Her cheeks were pale, her hair hung lank,
 Her sunken eyes gleamed wild.

“ And have you no kind mother, child ? ”
I asked, with softened tone.

“ My mother went away lang syne,
And left me here alone.

“ ’Twas in the winter weather, black,
The night lay on the moor ;
The angry winds went howling by
Our creaking cottage door.

“ My mother lay upon her bed,
She shook and shivered sore ;
She clasped me in her trembling arms,
She kissed me o’er and o’er.

“ I knelt beside her on the ground,
I wailed in bitter sorrow ;
The wind without upon the moor
My wailing seemed to borrow.

“ My mother strove to soothe my grief ;
But while she spoke, alas !
Across her sunken face I saw
A sudden shadow pass.

“ And she fell back, so weak and wan,—
Oh ! Sir, I never heard
Her voice again, or caught the sound
Of one fond farewell word !

“ The black winds blew—my eyes were dry ;
I hushed my bitter moan,
But I knew that she was gone away,
And I was left alone.

“ The black winds blew—the heavy hail
On hill and holt was driven ;
But *she* went up the golden stair,
And through the gate of heaven.

“ They bore her to the churchyard grave
The little daisies love it ;
But I never sit the mound beside,
Nor shed a tear above it.

“ My mother is not there ; in dreams,
When winter woods are hoary,
I see her on the golden stair,
Beside the gate of glory.

“ Her eyes are calm, her forehead shines,
Amid the heavenly splendour ;
On earth her face was kind, but ne'er
Wore smiles so sweet and tender.

“ And, Sir, one night, not long ago,—
December storms were beating,—
I heard her voice, so fond and dear,
Float down, my name repeating.

“ The fir-trees rocked upon the hill,
And blast to blast was calling—
She said, ‘ The earth is dark and drear ;
Come home, come home, my darling .

“ The black winds blew—the heavy hail
On hill and holt was driven—
She said, ‘ Come up the golden stair,
And through the gate of heaven !’

“ And soon, oh soon !”—but here her speech
Broke off; a sudden lightness
Passed o'er the child's pale cheek and brow,
As with a sunbeam's brightness,—

And she went wand'ring o'er the moor,
Low crooning some wild ditty ;—
‘ God's calm,’ I said, “ be on her shed,
And God's exceeding pity !”

UNDER MY WINDOW.

UNDER my window, under my window,
All in the midsummer weather,
Three little girls, with fluttering curls,
Flit to and fro, together ;
There's Bell with her bonnet of satin sheen,
And Maud, with her mantle of silver-green,
And Jeanne, with the scarlet feather.

Under my window, under my window,
Leaning stealthily over ;
Merry and clear, the voice I hear
Of each glad-hearted rover.
Ah ! sly little Jeanne, she steals my roses,
And Maud and Bell twine wreaths and posies,
As busy as bees in clover.

Under my window, under my window,
In the blue midsummer weather,
Stealing slow, on a hushed tiptoe,
I catch them all together.

Bell, with her bonnet of satin sheen,
And Maud, with her mantle of silver-green,
And Jeanne, with the scarlet feather.

Under my window, under my window,
And off, through the orchard closes,
While Maud she flouts, and Bell she pouts,
They scamper, and drop their posies ;
But dear little Jeanne takes naught amiss,
And leaps in my arms with a loving kiss,
And I give her all my roses.

MAUD.

LITTLE Maud, my queen !
Oh ! the winsome lady !
All the bright midsummer day,
Thrush and black-cap on the spray,
Sing for her so blithe and gay,
In the wood-depths shady.
Ah ! but Maud, my queen,
By your troth remember,
You've a poet, all your own,
Keeps for you his sweetest tone,
Singing, not in June alone,
But in bleak December.
Maud, my lady, if you please,
Say whose singing's best of these ?

Little Maud, my queen !
Oh ! the winsome lady !

Leaps her lap-dog to and fro,
 Fawning-fond her hound doth grow,
 When she pats and pets them so,
 In the wood-depths shady.
 Ah ! but Maud, my queen,
 By your troth remember,
 You've a poet loves you still,
 Be your humour what it will
 Cross or kind, or warm or chill,
 June or bleak December.
 Maud, my lady, if you please,
 Say whose loving's best of these ?

THE PROUDEST LADY.

THE Queen is proud on her throne,
 And proud are her Maids so fine,
 But the proudest lady that ever was known,
 Is a little lady of mine.
 And oh ! she flouts me, she flouts me !
 And spurns, and scorns, and scouts me !
 Though I drop on my knee, and sue for grace,
 And beg and beseech, with the saddest face,
 Still ever the same she doubts me.

She is seven, by the calendar,
 A lily's almost as tall ;
 But oh ! this little lady's by far
 The proudest lady of all.
 It's her sport and pleasure to flout me !
 To spurn, and scorn, and scout me !

But ah ! I've a notion it's naught but play,
And that, say what she will and feign what she may,
She can't well do without me.

When she rides on her nag, away,
By park and road and river,
In a little hat, so janty and gay,
Oh ! then she's prouder than ever !
And oh ! what faces, what faces !
What petulant, pert grimaces !
Why, the very pony prances and winks,
And tosses his head, and plainly thinks
He may ape her airs and graces.

But at times, like a pleasant tune,
A sweeter mood o'ertakes her ;
Oh ! then she's sunny as skies of June,
And all her pride forsakes her.
Oh ! she dances round me so fairly !
Oh ! her laugh rings out so rarely !
Oh ! she coaxes, and nestles, and purrs, and pries,
In my puzzled face, with her two great eyes,
And owns she loves me dearly.

Ay, the Queen is proud on her throne,
And proud are her Maids so fine ;
But the proudest lady that ever was known,
Is this little lady of mine.
Good lack ! she flouts me, she flouts me !
She spurns, and scorns, and scouts me !
But ah ! I've a notion it's naught but play
And that, say what she will and think what she may,
She can't well do without me.

THE BABY'S THOUGHTS.

WHAT'S the Baby thinking of?
Can you guess? Can you guess?
From between the budding leaves,
Underneath the cottage eaves,
Came an answer, "Yes, yes, yes!"

"In the meadow," chirped the Swallow,
"I was flying, all the day;
I saw Baby in the clover,
Toddling, tumbling, rolling over,
In his merry play;
Hiding in each grassy hollow,
Out of nurse's way.

"Midst the buttercups I saw him;
He was humming like the bee,
And the daisies seemed to draw him,
For he crowed to see
All their white and pinky faces,
Starring over the green places,
'Neath the poplar-tree.
And the butterfly that pleased him,
And the May-bloom, out of reach,
And the little breeze that teased him,
He is thinking now of each.
Search his eyes, and you shall see
King-cups, meshed in golden mazes,
And a thousand starry daisies,
And a sunbeam, flashing free,
And a little shifting shadow,

Such as fluttered o'er the meadow,
From the fluttering tree.

Kiss his lip, and taste the rare
Honey-sweetness lingering on it ;
Kiss his pretty forehead fair,
May-bloom odours dropped upon it ;
And the naughty beeze also—
Kiss his cheek, and you shall find it
In the rich and rosy glow,
And the freshness left behind it.
On all these doth Baby ponder,
And they wile him forth to wander
Still, through fields of scented clover,
Toddling, tumbling, rolling over ;
Hiding in each grassy hollow.”
Thus, between the budding leaves,
Underneath the cottage eaves,
Answer made our friend the Swallow.

David Gray.

IN THE SHADOWS

I.

“ **W**HOM the gods love die young.” The thought is old ;
And yet it soothed the sweet Athenian mind.
I take it with all pleasure, overbold,
Perhaps, yet to its virtue much inclined
By an inherent love for what is fair.
This is the utter poetry of woe,—
That the bright-flashing gods should cure despair
By love, and make youth precious here below.

I die, being young ; and, dying, could become
 A pagan, with the tender Grecian trust.
 Let Death, the fell anatomy, benumb
 The hand that writes, and fill my mouth with dust,—
 Chant no funereal theme, but, with a choral
 Hymn, O ye mourners ! hail immortal youth auroral !

II.

O MANY a time with Ovid have I borne
 My father's vain, yet well-meant reprimand,
 To leave the sweet-aired, clover-purpled land
 Of rhyme,—its Lares loftily forlorn,
 With all their pure humanities unworn,—
 To batten on the bare Theologies !
 To quench a glory lighted at the skies,
 Fell on one essence with the silver morn,
 Were of all blasphemies the most insane.
 So, deeper given to the delicious spell,
 I clung to thee, heart-soothing Poesy !
 Now on a sick-bed racked with arrowy pain,
 I lift white hands of gratitude, and cry,
 Spirit of God in Milton ! was it well ?

III.

LAST night, on coughing slightly, with sharp pain,
 There came arterial blood, and with a sigh
 Of absolute grief I cried in bitter vein,
 That drop is my death-warrant : I must die.
 Poor meagre life is mine, meagre and poor !
 Rather a piece of childhood thrown away ;
 An adumbration faint ; the overture
 To stifled music ; year that ends in May ;

The sweet beginning of a tale unknown ;
 A dream unspoken ; promise unfulfilled ;
 A morning with no noon, a rose unblown,—
 All its deep rich vermillion crushed and killed
 I' th' bud by frost :—Thus in false fear I cried,
 Forgetting that to abolish death Christ died.

IV.

SWEETLY, my mother ! Go not yet away,—
 I have not told my story. Oh, not yet,
 With the fair past before me, can I lay
 My cheek upon the pillow to forget.
 O sweet, fair past, my twenty years of youth
 Thus thrown away, not fashioning a man ;
 But fashioning a memory, forsooth !
 More feminine than follower of Pan.
 O God ! let me not die for years and more !
 Fulfil Thyself, and I will live then surely
 Longer than a mere childhood. Now heart-sore,
 Weary, with being weary,—weary, purely.
 In dying, mother, I can find no pleasure
 Except in being near thee with^ut measure.

V.

HEW Atlas for my monument ! upraise
 A pyramid for my tomb, that, undestroyed
 By rank, oblivion, and the hungry void,
 My name shall echo through prospective days.
 O careless conqueror ! cold, abysmal Grave !
 Is it not sad—is it not sad, my heart—
 To smother young Ambition, and depart
 Unhonoured and unwilling, like Death's slave ?

No rare, immortal remnant of my thought
 Embalms my life; no poem, firmly reared
 Against the shock of time, ignobly feared,—
 But all my life's progression come to naught.
 Hew Atlas! build a pyramid in a plain!
 Oh, cool the fever burning in my brain!

VI.

NOW, while the long-delaying ash assumes
 The delicate April green, and, loud and clear,
 Through the cool, yellow, mellow twilight glooms.
 The thrush's song enchanteth the captive ear;
 Now, while a shower is pleasant in the falling,
 Stirring the still perfume that wakes around;
 Now, that doves mourn, and from the distance calling,
 The cuckoo answers, with a sovereign sound,—
 Come, with thy native heart, O true and tried!
 But leave all books; for what with converse high,
 Flavoured with Attic wit, the time shall glide
 On smoothly, as a river floweth by,
 Or as on stately pinion, through the gray
 Evening, the culver cuts his liquid way.

VII.

WHY are all fair things at their death the fairest?
 Beauty the beautifulst in decay?
 Why doth rich sunset clothe each closing day
 With ever-new apparelling the rarest?
 Why are the sweetest melodies all born
 Of pain and sorrow? Mourneth not the dove,
 In the green forest gloom, an absent love?
 Leaning her breast against that cruel thorn,

Doth not the nightingale, poor bird, complain
 And integrate her uncontrollable woe
 To such perfection, that to hear is pain ?
 Thus, Sorrow and Death—alone realities—
 Sweeten their ministrations, and bestow
 On troublous life a relish of the skies !

VIII.

THE daisy-flower is to the Summer sweet,
 Though utterly unknown it live and die ;
 The spherical harmony were incomplete
 Did the dewed laverock mount no more the sky,
 Because her music's linkèd sorcery
 Bewitched no mortal heart to heavenly mood.
 This is the law of Nature, that the deed
 Should dedicate its excellence to God,
 And in so doing find sufficient meed.
 Then why should I make these heart-burning cries
 In sickly rhyme with morbid feeling rife,
 For fame and temporal felicities ?
 Forgetting that in holy labour lies
 'The scholarship severe of human life.

IX.

O GOD, it is a terrible thing to die
 Into the inextinguishable life ;
 To leave this known world with a feeble cry.
 All its poor jarring and ignoble strife.
 O that some shadowy spectre would disclose
 The Future, and the soul's confineless hunger
 Satisfy with some knowledge of repose !
 For here the lust of avarice waxeth stronger,

Making life hateful ; youth alone is true,
 Full of a glorious self-forgetfulness :
 Better to die inhabiting the new
 Kingdom of faith and promise, and confess,
 Even in the agony and last eclipse,
 Some revelation of the Apocalypse !

x.

OCTOBER'S gold is dim,—the forests rot,
 The weary rain falls ceaseless, while the day
 Is wrapped in damp. In mire of village way
 The hedge-row leaves are stamped, and, all forgot,
 The broodless nest sits visible in the thorn.
 Autumn, among her drooping marigolds,
 Weeps all her garnered sheaves, and empty folds,
 And dripping orchards,—plundered and forlorn.
 The season is a dead one, and I die !
 No more, no more for me the Spring shall make
 A resurrection in the Earth, and take
 The death from out her heart—O God, I die !
 The cold throat-mist creeps nearer, till I breathe
 Corruption. Drop, stark night, upon my death !

xi.

DIE down, O dismal day ! and let me live.
 And come, blue deeps ! magnificently strewn
 With coloured clouds—large, light, and fugitive—
 By upper winds through pompous motions blown.
 Now it is death in life,—a vapour dense
 Creeps round my window till I cannot see
 The far snow-shining mountains, and the glens
 Shagging the mountain-tops. O God ! make free

This barren, shackled earth, so deadly cold,—
 Breathe gently forth Thy Spring, till Winter flies
 In rude amazement, fearful and yet bold,
 While she performs her customed charities.
 I weigh the loaded hours till life is bare—
 O God! for one clear day, a snow-drop, and sweet air!

XII.

SOMETIMES, when sunshine and blue sky prevail,—
 When spent winds sleep, and, from the budding larch
 Small birds, with incomplete, vague sweetness, hail
 The unconfirmed yet quickening life of March,—
 Then say I to myself, half-eased of care,
 Toying with hope as with a maiden's token,—
 “ This glorious, invisible fresh air
 Will clear my blood till the disease be broken.”
 But slowly, from the wild and infinite west,
 Up-sails a cloud, full-charged with bitter sleet.
 The omen gives my spirit much unrest;
 I fling aside the hope, as indiscreet,—
 A false enchantment, treacherous and fair,—
 And sink into my habit of despair.

XIII.

O WINTER! wilt thou never, never go?
 O Summer! but I weary for thy coming;
 Longing once more to hear the Luggie flow,
 And frugal bees laboriously humming.
 Now, the east wind diseases the infirm,
 And I must crouch in corners from rough weather.
 Sometimes a winter sunset is a charm,—
 When the fired clouds, compacted, blaze together,

And the large sun dips, red, behind the hills.
 I, from my window, can behold this pleasure ;
 And the eternal moon, what time she fills
 Her orb with argent, treading a soft measure,
 With queenly motion of a bridal mood,
 Through the white spaces of infinitude.

xiv.

O BEAUTIFUL moon ! O beautiful moon ! again
 Thou persecutest me until I bend
 My brow, and soothe the aching of my brain.
 I cannot see what handmaidens attend
 Thy silver passage as the heaven clears ;
 For, like a slender mist, a sweet vexation
 Works in my heart, till the impulsive tears
 Confess the bitter pain of adoration.
O, too, too beautiful moon ! lift the white shell
 Of thy soft splendour through the shining air !
 I own the magic power, the witching spell,
 And, blinded by thy beauty, call thee fair !
 Alas ! not often now thy silver horn
 Shall me delight with dreams and mystic love forlorn !

v.

TIS April, yet the wind retains its tooth.
 I cannot venture in the biting air,
 But sit and feign wild trash and dreams uncouth,
 “ Stretched on the rack of a too-easy chair.”
 And when the day has howled itself to sleep,
 The lamp is lighted in my little room ;
 And lowly, as the tender lapwings creep,
 Comes my own mother, wth her love’s perfume.

O living sons with living mothers ! learn
 Their worth, and use them gently, with no chiding
 For youth, I know, is quick ; of temper stern
 Sometimes ; and apt to blunder without guiding.
 So was I long, but now I see her move,
 Transfigured in the radiant mist of love.

XVI.

"Thou art wearin' awa', Jean,
 Like snaw when it's thaw, Jean ;
 Thou art wearin' awa'
 To the land o' the leal."—*Old Song.*

O THE impassable sorrow, mother mine !
 Of the sweet, mournful air which, clear and well,
 For me thou singest ! Never the divine
 Mahometan harper, famous Israfel,
 Such rich enchanting luxury of woe
 Elicted from all his golden strings !
 Therefore, dear singer sad ! chant clear, and low,
 And lovingly, the bard's imaginings.
 O poet unknown ! conning thy verses o'er
 In lone, dim places, sorrowfully sweet ;
 And O musician ! touching the quick core
 Of pity, when thy skilful closes meet,—
 My tears confess your witchery as they flow,
 Since I, too, *wear* away like the unenduring snow.

XVII.

O THOU of purer eyes than to behold
 Uncleanliness ! sift my soul, removing all
 Strange thoughts, imaginings fantastical,
 Iniquitous allurements manifold.

Make it a spiritual ark ; abode
 Severely sacred, perfumed, sanctified,
 Wherein the Prince of Purities may abide,—
 The holy and eternal Spirit of God.

The gross, adhesive loathsomeness of sin,
 Give me to see. Yet, O far more, far more,
 That beautiful purity which the saints adore
 In a consummate Paradise within
 The Veil,—O Lord, upon my soul bestow
 An earnest of that purity here below.

MISCELLANEOUS SONNETS

I.

A LIME-TREE broad of bough and rough of trunk
 Deepens a shadow, as the evening cool,
 Over the Luggie gathering in deep pool
 Contemplative, its waters summer-shrunk ;
 The Lammas floods have sucked away the mould
 About its roots, and now in bare sunshine
 Like knot of snakes they twine and intertwine
 Fantastic implication, fold in fold.
 Secure in covert, 'neath the fringing fern
 Lurks the bright-speckled trout, untroubled, save
 When boyhood with a glorious unconcern
 Eagerly plunges in the sleeping wave.
 Here the much-musing poet might recapture
 The inspiration flown, the vagrant rapture.

II.

O DEEP, unlovely brooklet, moaning slow
 Through moorish fen in utter loneliness !
 The partridge cowers beside thy loamy flow
 In pulseful tremor, when with sudden press
 The huntsman flushes through the rustled heather.
 In March thy swallow-buds from vermeil shells
 Break satin-tinted, downy as the feather
 Of moss-chat that among the purplish bells
 Breasts into fresh new life her three unborn.
 The plover hovers o'er thee, uttering clear
 And mournful—strange, his human cry forlorn :
 While wearily, alone, and void of cheer,
 Thou guid'st thy nameless waters from the fen,
 To sleep unsunned in an untrampled glen.

III.

COME, light-foot Lady ! from thy vaporous hall
 And, with a silver-swim into the air,
 Shine down the starry cresses one and all
 From Pleiades to golden Jupiter !
 I see a growing tip of silver peep
 Above the full-fed cloud, and lo ! with motion
 Of queenly stateliness, and smooth as sleep,
 She glides into the blue for my devotion.
 O sovran Beauty ! standing here alone
 Under the insufferable infinite,
 I worship with dazed eyes and feeble moan
 Thy lucid persecution of delight.
 Come, cloudy dimness ! Dip, fair dream, again !
 O God ! I cannot gaze, for utter pain.

IV.

O FOR the days of sweet Mythology,
When dripping Naiads taught their streams to glide !
When, mid the greenery, one would ofttimes spy
An Oread tripping with her face aside.
The dismal realms of Dis by Virgil sung,
Whose shade led Dante, in his virtue bold,
All the sad grief and agony among,
O'er Acheron, that mournful river old,
Even to the Stygian tide of purple gloom !
Pan in the forest making melody !
And far away where hoariest billows boom,
Old Neptune's steeds with snorting nostrils high !
These were the ancient days of sunny song ;
Their memory yet how dear to the poetic throng !

THE ANEMONE.

I HAVE wandered far to-day,
In a pleased unquiet way ;
Over hill and songful hollow,
Vernal byways, fresh and fair,
Did I simple fancies follow ;
Till, upon a hill-side bare,
Suddenly I chanced to see
A little white anemone.

Beneath a clump of furze it grew ;
And never mortal eye did view
Its rathe and slender beauty, till
I saw it in no mocking mood ;

For with its sweetness did it fill
To me the ample solitude.
A fond remembrance made me see
Strange light in the anemone.

One April day when I was seven,
Beneath the clear and deepening heaven,
My father, God preserve him ! went
With me a Scottish mile and more ;
And in a playful merriment
He decked my bonnet o'er and o'er—
To fling a sunshine on his ease—
With tenderest anemones.

Now, gentle reader, as I live,
This snowy little bloom did give
My being most endearing throes.
I saw my father in his prime ;
But youth it comes, and youth it goes,
And he has spent his blithest time :
Yet dearer grown through all to me,
And dearer the anemone.

So with the spirit of a sage
I plucked it from its hermitage,
And placed it 'tween the sacred leaves
Of *Agnes' Eve* at that rare part
Where she her fragrant robe unweaves,
And with a gently beating heart,
In troubled bliss and balmy woe,
Lies down to dream of Porphyro.

Let others sing of that and this,
In war and science find their bliss ;

Vainly they seek and will not find
The subtle lore that Nature brings
Unto the reverential mind,—

The pathos worn by common things,
By every flower that lights the lea,
And by the pale anemone.

AN ILLUSION DISPELLED.

LAST night a vision was dispelled,
Which I can never dream again ;
A wonder from the earth has gone,
A passion from my brain.
I saw upon a budding ash
A cuckoo, and she blithely sung
To all the valleys round about,
While on a branch she swung.
“ Cuckoo, cuckoo ! ”—I looked around,
And, like a dream fulfilled,
A slender bird of modest brown
My sight with wonder thrilled.
I looked again, and yet again ;
My eyes, thought I, do sure deceive me ;
But when belief made doubting vain,
Alas, the sight did grieve me.
For twice to-day I heard the cry,
The hollow cry of melting love ;
And twice a tear bedimmed my eye.—
I saw the singer in the grove,
I saw him pipe his eager tone,
Like any other common bird,

And, as I live, the sovereign cry
Was not the one I always heard.
O why within that lusty wood
Did I the fairy sight behold ?
O why within that solitude
Was I thus blindly overbold ?
My heart, forgive me ! for indeed
I cannot speak my thrilling pain :
The wonder vanished from the earth,
The passion from my brain.

IN THE STORM.

OH, many a leaf will fall to-night,
As she wanders through the wood !
And many an angry gust will break
The dreary solitude.
I wonder if she's past the bridge,
Where Luggie moans beneath ;
While rain-drops clash in planted lines
On rivulet and heath.
Disease hath laid his palsied palm
Upon my aching brow ;
The headlong blood of twenty-one
Is thin and sluggish now.
'Tis nearly ten ! A fearful night,
Without a single star
To light the shadow on her soul
With sparkle from afar :
The moon is canopied with clouds,
And her burden it is sore ;—

What would wee Jackie do, if he
Should never see her more ?
Ay, light the lamp, and hang it up
At the window fair and free ;
'Twill be a beacon on the hill
To let your mother see.
And trim it well, my little Ann,
For the night is wet and cold,
And you know the weary, winding way
Across the miry wold.
All drenched will be her simple gown,
And the wet will reach her skin :
I wish that I could wander down,
And the red quarry win,—
To take the burden from her back,
And place it upon mine ;
With words of cheerful condolence,
Not uttered to repine.
You have a kindly mother, dears,
As ever bore a child,
And Heaven knows I love her well
In passion undefiled.
Ah me ! I never thought that she
Would brave a night like this,
While I sat weaving by the fire
A web of fantasies.
How the winds beat this home of ours
With arrow-falls of rain ;
This lonely home upon the hill
They beat with might and main.
And mid the tempest one lone heart
Anticipates the glow,

Whence, all her weary journey done,
 Shall happy welcome flow.
 'Tis after ten ! O, were she here,
 Young man although I be,
 I could fall down upon her neck,
 And weep right gushingly !
 I have not loved her half enough,
 The dear old toiling one,
 The silent watcher by my bed,
 In shadow or in sun.

MY LITTLE BROTHER.

“ Happy child !
 Thou art so exquisitely wild,
 I think of thee with many tears,
 For what may be thy lot in future years.”

Wordsworth.

THE goldening peach on the orchard wall,
 Soft feeding in the sun,
 Hath never so downy and rosy a cheek
 As this laughing little one.
 The brook that murmurs and dimples alone
 Through glen, and grove, and lea,
 Hath never a life so merry and true
 As my brown little brother of three.
 From flower to flower, and from bower to bower,
 In my mother’s garden green,
 A-peering at this, and a-cheering at that,
 The funniest ever was seen ; —
 Now throwing himself in his mother’s lap,
 With his cheek upon her breast,

He tells his wonderful travels, forsooth !
 And chatters himself to rest.
 And what may become of that brother of mine,
 Asleep in his mother's bosom ?
 Will the wee rosy bud of his being, at last
 Into a wild-flower blossom ?
 Will the hopes that are deepening as silent and fair
 As the azure about his eye,
 Be told in glory and motherly pride,
 Or answered with a sigh ?
 Let the curtain rest : for, alas ! 'tis told
 That Mercy's hand benign
 Hath woven and spun the gossamer thread
 That forms the fabric so fine.
 Then dream, dearest Jackie ! thy sinless dream,
 And waken as blithe and as free ;
 There's many a change in twenty long years,
 My brown little brother of three.

Frederick Locker.

ON AN OLD MUFF.

TIME has a magic wand !
 What is this meets my hand,
 Moth-eaten, mouldy, and
 Covered with fluff ?
 Faded, and stiff, and scant ;
 Can it be ? no, it can't—
 Yes,—I declare 'tis Aunt
 Prudence's Muff !

Years ago—twenty-three !
Old Uncle Barnaby
Gave it to Aunty P.—
 Laughing and teasing—
“Pru., of the breezy curls,
Whisper these solemn churls,
What holds a pretty girl's
 Hand without squeezing?”

Uncle was then a lad
Gay, but, I grieve to add,
Sinful : if smoking bad
 Baccy's a vice :
Glossy was then this mink
Muff, lined with pretty pink
Satin, which maidens think
 “Awfully nice !”

I see, in retrospect,
Aunt, in her best bedecked,
Gliding, with mien erect,
 Gravely to Meeting :
Psalm-book, and kerchief new,
Peeped from the muff of Pru.—
Young men—and pious too—
 Giving her greeting.

Pure was the life she led
Then—from this Muff, 'tis said
Tracts she distributed :—
 Scapegraces many,
Seeing the grace they lacked,
Followed her—one, in fact,

Asked for—and got his tract
Oftener than any.

Love has a potent spell !
Soon this bold Ne'er-do-well,
Aunt's sweet susceptible
Heart undermining,
Slipped, so the scandal runs,
Notes in the pretty nun's
Muff—triple-cornered ones—
Pink as its lining !

Worse even, soon the jade
Fled (to oblige her blade !)
Whilst her friends thought that they'd
Locked her up tightly :
After such shocking games
Aunt is of wedded dames
Gayest—and now her name's
Mrs. Golightly.

In female conduct flaw
Sadder I never saw,
Still I've faith in the law
Of compensation.

Once Uncle went astray—
Smoked, joked, and swore away—
Sworn by, he's now, by a
Large congregation !

Changed is the Child of Sin,
Now he's (he once was thin)
Grave, with a double chin,—
Blest be his fat form !

Changed is the garb he wore,—
 Preacher was never more
 Prized than is Uncle for
 Pulpit or platform

If all's as best befits
 Mortals of slender wits,
 Then beg this Muff, and its
 Fair Owner pardon :
All's for the best,—indeed
 Such is *my* simple creed—
 Still I must go and weed
 Hard in my garden.

A WISH.

TO the south of the church, and beneath yonder
 yew,
 A pair of child-lovers I've seen ;
 More than once were they there, and the years of
 the two,
 When added, might number thirteen.

They sat on the grave that has n'ever a stone
 'The name of the dead to determine,
 It was Life paying Death a brief visit—alone
 A notable text for a sermon.

They tenderly prattled ; what was it they said ?
 The turf on that hillock was new ;
 Dear Little Ones, did ye know aught of the Dead,
 Or could he be heedful of you ?

I wish to believe, and believe it I must,
Her father beneath them was laid :
I wish to believe,—I will take it on trust,
That father knew all that they said.

My own, you are five, very nearly the age
Of that poor little fatherless child :
And some day a true-love your heart will engage,
When on earth I my last may have smiled.

Then visit my grave, like a good little lass,
Where'er it may happen to be,
And if any daisies should peer through the grass,
Be sure they are kisses from me.

And place not a stone to distinguish my name,
For strangers to see and discuss :
But come with your lover, as these lovers came,
And talk to him sweetly of us.

And while you are smiling, your father will smile
Such a dear little daughter to have,
But mind—oh yes, mind you are happy the while—
I wish you to visit my Grave.

OLD LETTERS.

OLD letters! wipe away the tear
For vows and hopes so vainly worded?
A pilgrim finds his journal here
Since first his youthful loins were girded.

Yes, here are wails from Clapham Grove,
How could philosophy expect us
To live with Dr. Wise, and love
Rice pudding and the Greek *Delectus*?

Explain why childhood's path is sown
With moral and scholastic tin-tacks;
Ere sin original was known,
Did Adam groan beneath the syntax?

How strange to parley with the dead!
Keep ye your green, wan leaves? How many
From Friendship's tree untimely shed!
And here is one as sad as any;

A ghastly bill! "I disapprove,"
And yet She helped me to defray it—
What tokéns of a Mother's love!
O, bitter thought! I can't repav it.

And here's the offer that I wrote
In '33 to Lucy Diver;
And here John Wylie's begging note,—
He never paid me back a stiver.

And here my feud with Major Spike,
Our bet about the French Invasion;
I must confess I acted like
A donkey upon that occasion.

Here's news from Paternoster Row!
How mad I was when first I learned it:
They would not take my Book, and now
I'd give a trifle to have burnt it.

And here a pile of notes, at last,
With "love," and "dove," and "sever," "never :"
Though hope, though passion may be past,
Their perfume is as sweet as ever.

A human heart should beat for two,
Despite the scoffs of single scorners ;
And all the hearths I ever knew
Had got a pair of chimney corners.

See here a double violet—
Two locks of hair—a deal of scandal ;
I'll burn what only brings regret—
Go, Betty, fetch a lighted candle.

UNFORTUNATE MISS BAILEY.

(AN EXPERIMENT.)

WHEN he whispers, "O Miss Bailey,
Thou art brightest of the throng"—
She makes murmur, softly-gayly—
"Alfred, I have loved thee long."

Then he drops upon his knees, a
Proof his heart is soft as wax :
She's—I don't know who, but he's a
Captain bold from Halifax.

Though so loving, such another
Artless bride was never seen,
Coachee thinks that she's his mother
—Till they get to Gretna Green.

There they stand, by him attended,
Hear the sable smith rehearse
That which links them, when 'tis ended,
Tight for better—or for worse.

Now her heart rejoices—ugly
Troubles need disturb her less—
Now the Happy Pair are snugly
Seated in the night express.

So they go with fond emotion,
So they journey through the night—
London is their land of Goshen—
See, its suburbs are in sight !

Hark ! the sound of life is swelling,
Pacing up, and racing down,
Soon they reach her simple dwelling—
Burley Street, by Somers Town.

What is there to so astound them ?
She cries “ Oh !” for he cries “ Hah !”
When five brats emerge, confound them !
Shouting out, “ Mamma !—PAPA !”

While at this he wonders blindly,
Nor their meaning can divine,
Proud she turns them round, and kindly,
“ All of these are mine and thine !”

* * * * *

Here he pines and grows dyspeptic,
Losing heart he loses pith—
Hints that Bishop Tait’s a sceptic—
Swears that Moses was a myth.

Sees no evidence in Paley—
Takes to drinking ratifa :
Shies the muffins at Miss Bailey
While she's pouring out the tea.

One day, knocking up his quarters,
Poor Miss Bailey found him dead,
Hanging in his knotted garters,
Which she knitted ere they wed.

THE WIDOW'S MITE.

THE Widow had but only one,
A puny and decrepit son ;
Yet day and night,
Though fretful oft, and weak, and small,
A loving child, he was her all—
The Widow's Mite.

The Widow's might,—yes ! so sustained,
She battled onward, nor complained
When friends were fewer :
And, cheerful at her daily care,
A little crutch upon the stair
Was music to her.

I saw her then,—and now I see,
Though cheerful and resigned, still she
Has sorrowed much :
She has—He gave it tenderly—
Much faith—and, carefully laid by,
A little crutch.

MY FIRST-BORN.

“ **H**E shan’t be their namesake, the rather
That both are such opulent men :
His name shall be that of his father,—
My Benjamin—shortened to Ben.

“ Yes, Ben, though it cost him a portion
In each of my relative’s wills,
I scorn such baptismal extortion—
(That creaking of boots must be Squills).

“ It is clear, though his means may be narrow,
This infant his age will adorn ;
I shall send him to Oxford from Harrow,—
I wonder how soon he’ll be born !”

A spouse thus was airing his fancies
Below—’twas a labour of love,—
And calmly reflecting on Nancy’s
More practical labour above ;

Yet while it so pleased him to ponder,
Elated, at ease, and alone ;
That pale, patient victim up yonder
Had budding delights of her own ;

Sweet thoughts, in their essence diviner
Than paltry ambition and pelf ;
A cherub, no babe will be finer,
Invented and nursed by herself.

One breakfasting, dining, and teaing,
With appetite naught can appease,
And quite a young Reasoning Being
When called on to yawn and to sneeze.

What cares that heart, trusting and tender,
For fame or avuncular wills?
Except for the name and the gender,
She is almost as tranquil as Squills.

That father, in reverie centred,
Dumfounded, his thoughts in a whirl,
Heard Squills, as the creaking boots entered,
Announce that his Boy was—a Girl.

ADELAIDE ANNE PROCTER.

A WOMAN'S QUESTION.

BEFORE I trust my Fate to thee,
Or place my hand in thine,
Before I let thy Future give
Colour and form to mine,
Before I peril all for thee, question thy soul to-night for
me.

I break all slighter bonds, nor feel
A shadow of regret:
Is there one link within the Past
That holds thy spirit yet?
Or is thy Faith as clear and free as that which I can pledge
to thee?

Does there within thy dimmest dreams
A possible future shine,
Wherein thy life could henceforth breathe,
Untouched, unshared by mine ?
If so, at any pain or cost, O, tell me before all is lost.

Look deeper still. If thou canst feel
Within thy inmost soul,
That thou hast kept a portion back,
While I have staked the whole ;
Let no false pity spare the blow, but in true mercy tell me
so.

Is there within thy heart a need
That mine cannot fulfil ?
One chord that any other hand
Could better wake or still ?
Speak now—lest at some future day my whole life wither
and decay.

Lives there within thy nature hid
The demon-spirit Change,
Shedding a passing glory still
On all things new and strange ?—
It may not be thy fault alone—but shield my heart against
thy own.

Couldst thou withdraw thy hand one day
And answer to my claim,
That Fate, and that to-day's mistake—
Not thou—had been to blame ?
Some soothe their conscience thus; but thou wilt surely
warn and save me now.

Nay, answer *not*,—I dare not hear,

The words would come too late;

Yet I would spare thee all remorse,

So, comfort thee, my Fate—

Whatever on my heart may fall—remember, I *would* risk
it all !

A DOUBTING HEART.

WHÈRE are the swallows fled ?
Frozen and dead,

Perchance upon some bleak and stormy shore.

O doubting heart !

Far over purple seas,

They wait, in sunny ease,

The balmy southern breeze,

To bring them to their northern homes once more

Why must the flowers die ?

Prisoned they lie

In the cold tomb, heedless of tears or rain.

O doubting heart !

They only sleep below

The soft white ermine snow,

While winter winds shall blow,

To breathe and smile upon you soon again,

The sun has hid its rays

These many days ;

Will dreary hours never leave the earth ?

O doubting heart !

The stormy clouds on high
Veil the same sunny sky,
That soon (for spring is nigh)
Shall wake the summer into golden mirth.

Fair hope is dead, and light
Is quenched in night.
What sound can break the silence of despair ?
O doubting heart !
Thy sky is overcast,
Yet stars shall rise at last,
Brighter for darkness past,
And angels' silver voices stir the air.

A SHADOW.

WHAT lack the valleys and mountains
That once were green and gay ?
What lack the babbling fountains ?
Their voice is sad to-day.
Only the sound of a voice,
Tender and sweet and low,
That made the earth rejoice,
A year ago !

What lack the tender flowers ?
A shadow is on the sun :
What lack the merry hours,
That I long that they were done ?
Only two smiling eyes,
That told of joy and mirth ;
They are shining in the skies,
I mourn on earth !

What lacks my heart, that makes it
 So weary and full of pain,
That trembling Hope forsakes it,
 Never to come again?
 Only another heart,
 Tender and all mine own,
 In the still grave it lies;
 I weep alone!

RECOLLECTIONS.

AS strangers, you and I are here;
 We both as aliens stand
Where once, in years gone by, I dwelt
 No stranger in the land.
Then while you gaze on park and stream,
 Let me remain apart,
And listen to the awakened sound
 Of voices in my heart.

Here, where upon the velvet lawn
 The cedar spreads its shade,
And by the flower-beds all around
 Bright roses bloom and fade,
Shrill merry childish laughter rings,
 And baby voices sweet,
And by me, on the path, I hear
 The tread of little feet.

Down the dark avenue of limes,
 Whose perfume loads the air,
Whose boughs are rustling overhead
 (For the west wind is there),

I hear the sound of earnest talk,
 Warnings and counsels wise,
And the quick questioning that brought
 Such gentle, calm replies.

Still the light bridge hangs o'er the lake,
 Where broad-leaved lilies lie,
And the cool water shows again
 The cloud that moves on high ;—
And one voice speaks, in tones I thought
 The past forever kept ;
But now I know, deep in my heart
 Its echoes only slept.

I hear, within the shady porch,
 Once more, the measured sound
Of the old ballads that were read,
 While we sat listening round ;
The starry passion-flower still
 Up the green trellis climbs ;
The tendrils waving seem to keep
 The cadence of the rhymes.

I might have striven, and striven in vain,
 Such visions to recall,
Well known and yet forgotten ; now
 I see, I hear, them all !
The Present pales before the Past,
 Who comes with angel wings ;
As in a dream I stand, amidst
 Strange yet familiar things !

Enough ; so let us go, mine eyes
 Are blinded by their tears ;

A voice speaks to my soul to-day
Of long-forgotten years.
And yet the vision in my heart,
In a few hours more,
Will fade into the silent past,
Silently as before.

H U S H !

ICAN scarcely hear," she murmured,
"For my heart beats loud and fast,
But surely, in the far, far distance,
I can hear a sound at last."
"It is only the reapers singing,
As they carry home their sheaves ;
And the evening breeze has risen,
And rustles the dying leaves."
"Listen ! there are voices talking."
Calmly still she strove to speak,
Yet her voice grew faint and trembling,
And the red flushed in her cheek.
"It is only the children playing
Below, now their work is done,
And they laugh that their eyes are dazzled
By the rays of the setting sun."
Fainter grew her voice, and weaker,
As with anxious eyes she cried,
"Down the avenue of chestnuts,
I can hear a horseman ride."

“ It was only the deer that were feeding
 In a herd on the clover-grass,
 They were startled, and fled to the thicket,
 As they saw the reapers pass.”

Now the night arose in silence,
 Birds lay in their leafy nest,
 And the deer couched in the forest,
 And the children were at rest :
 There was only a sound of weeping
 From watchers around a bed,
 But Rest to the weary spirit,
 Peace to the quiet Dead !

THE REQUITAL.

LLOUD roared the Tempest,
 Fast fell the sleet ;
 A little Child Angel
 Passed down the street,
 With trailing pinions,
 And weary feet.

The moon was hidden ;
 No stars were bright ;
 So she could not shelter
 In heaven that night,
 For the Angels’ ladders
 Are rays of light.

She beat her wings
 At each window-pane,

And pleaded for shelter,
But all in vain :—
“ Listen,” they said,
“ To the pelting rain !”

She sobbed, as the laughter
And mirth grew higher,
“ Give me rest and shelter
Beside your fire,
And I will give you
Your heart’s desire.”

The dreamer sat watching
His embers gleam,
While his heart was floating
Down Hope’s bright stream ;
. . . So he wove her wailing
Into his dream.

The worker toiled on,
For his time was brief ;
The mourner was nursing
Her own pale grief :
They heard not the promise
That brought relief.

But fiercer the Tempest
Rose than before,
When the Angel paused
At a humble door,
And asked for shelter
And help once more.

A weary woman,
Pale, worn, and thin,

With the brand upon her
Of want and sin,
Heard the Child Angel
And took her in.

Took her in gently,
And did her best
To dry her pinions;
And made her rest
With tender pity
Upon her breast.

When the eastern morning
Grew bright and red,
Up the first sunbeam
The Angel fled;
Having kissed the woman
And left her—dead.

THREE ROSES.

JUST when the red June Roses blow
She gave me one,—a year ago.
A Rose whose crimson breath revealed
The secret that its heart concealed,
And whose half shy, half tender grace
Blushed back upon the giver's face.
A year ago—a year ago—
To none was not to know.

Just when the red June Roses blow
I plucked her one,—a month ago:

Its half-blown crimson to eclipse,
I laid it on her smiling lips ;
The balmy fragrance of the south
Drew sweetness from her sweeter mouth.

Swiftly do golden hours creep,—
To hold is not to keep.

The red June Roses now are past,
This very day I broke the last,—
And now its perfumed breath is hid,
With her, beneath a coffin-lid ;
There will its petals fall apart,
And wither on her icy heart :—

At three red Roses' cost
My world was gained and lost.

A D R E A M.

ALL yesterday I was spinning,
Sitting alone in the sun ;
And the dream that I spun was so lengthy,
It lasted till day was done.

I heeded not cloud or shadow
That flitted over the hill,
Or the humming-bees, or the swallows,
Or the trickling of the rill.

I took the threads for my spinning,
All of blue summer air,
And a flickering ray of sunlight
Was woven in here and there.

The shadows grew longer and longer,
The evening wind passed by,
And the purple splendour of sunset
Was flooding the western sky.

But I could not leave my spinning,
For so fair my dream had grown,
I heeded not, hour by hour,
How the silent day had flown.

At last the gray shadows fell round me,
And the night came dark and chill,
And I rose and ran down the valley,
And left it all on the hill.

I went up the hill this morning
To the place where my spinning lay,—
There was nothing but glistening dewdrop:
Remained of my dream to-day.

SENT TO HEAVEN.

I HAD a message to send her,
To her whom my soul loved best ;
But I had my task to finish,
And she was gone home to rest.

To rest in the far bright Heaven :
O, so far away from here,
It was vain to speak to my darling,
For I knew she could not hear !

I had a message to send her,
So tender, and true, and sweet,
I longed for an Angel to bear it,
And lay it down at her feet.

I placed it, one summer evening,
On a Cloudlet's fleecy breast ;
But it faded in golden splendour,
And died in the crimson west.

I gave it the Lark, next morning,
And I watched it soar and soar ;
But its pinions grew faint and weary,
And it fluttered to earth once more.

To the heart of a Rose I told it ;
And the perfume, sweet and rare,
Growing faint on the blue bright ether,
Was lost in the balmy air.

I laid it upon a Censer,
And I saw the incense rise ;
But its clouds of rolling silver
Could not reach the far blue skies.

I cried, in my passionate longing :—
“ Has the earth no Angel-friend
Who will carry my Love the message
That my heart desires to send ? ”

Then I heard a strain of music,
So mighty, so pure, so clear,
That my very sorrow was silent,
And my heart stood still to hear.

And I felt, in my soul's deep yearning,
 At last the sure answer stir :—
 “ The music will go up to Heaven
 And carry my thought to her.”

It rose in harmonious rushing
 Of mingled voices and strings,
 And I tenderly laid my message
 On the Music's outspread wings.

I heard it float farther and farther,
 In sound more perfect than speech ;
 Farther than sight can follow,
 Farther than soul can reach.

And I know that at last my message
 Has passed through the golden gate :
 So my heart is no longer restless,
 And I am content to wait.

A WOMAN'S ANSWER.

I WILL not let you say a Woman's part
 Must be to give exclusive love alone ;
 Dearest, although I love you so, my heart
 Answers a thousand claims besides your own.

I love—what do I not love ? Earth and air
 Find space within my heart, and myriad things
 You would not deign to heed are cherished there,
 And vibrate on its very inmost strings.

I love the Summer, with her ebb and flow
Of light, and warmth, and music, that have nursed
Her tender buds to blossoms . . . and you know
It was in summer that I saw you first.

I love the Winter dearly too, . . . but then
I owe it so much ; on a winter's day,
Bleak, cold, and stormy, you returned again,
When you had been those weary months away.

I love the Stars like friends ; so many nights
I gazed at them, when you were far from me,
Till I grew blind with tears . . . those far-off lights
Could watch you, whom I longed in vain to see.

I love the Flowers ; happy hours lie
Shut up within their petals close and fast :
You have forgotten, dear ; but they and I
Keep every fragment of the golden Past.

I love, too, to be loved ; all loving praise
Seems like a crown upon my Life,—to make
It better worth the giving, and to raise
Still nearer to your own the heart you take.

I love all good and noble souls ;—I heard
One speak of you but lately, and for days,
Only to think of it, my soul was stirred
In tender memory of such generous praise.

I love all those who love you ; all who owe
Comfort to you : and I can find regret
Even for those poorer hearts who once could know,
And once could love you, and can now forget.

Well, is my heart so narrow,—I, who spare
Love for all these? Do I not even hold
My favourite books in special tender care,
And prize them as a miser does his gold?

The Poets that you used to read to me
While summer twilights faded in the sky;
But most of all I think Aurora Leigh,
Because—because—do you remember why?

Will you be jealous? Did you guess before
I loved so many things?—Still you the best:—
Dearest, remember that I love you more,
O more a thousand times, than all the rest!

A TRYST WITH DEATH.

I AM footsore and very weary,
But I travel to meet a Friend:
The way is long and dreary,
But I know that it soon must end.

He is travelling fast like the whirlwind,
And though I creep slowly on,
We are drawing nearer, nearer,
And the journey is almost done.

Through the heat of many summers,
Through many a spring-time rain,
Through long autumns and weary winters,
I have hoped to meet him in vain

I know that he will not fail me,
So I count every hour chime,
Every throb of my own heart's beating,
That tells of the flight of Time.

On the day of my birth he plighted
His kingly word to me:—
I have seen him in dreams so often,
That I know what his smile must be.

I have toiled through the sunny woodland,
Through fields that basked in the light;
And through the lone paths in the forest
I crept in the dead of night.

I will not fear at his coming,
Although I must meet him alone;
He will look in my eyes so gently,
And take my hand in his own.

Like a dream all my toil will vanish,
When I lay my head on his breast:
But the journey is very weary,
And he only can give me rest.

Dinah Maria Muloch.

PHILIP MY KING.

“Who bears upon his baby brow the round
And top of sovereignty.”

LOOK at me with thy large brown eyes
Philip my king,
Round whom the enshadowing purple lies
Of babyhood’s royal dignities :
Lay on my neck thy tiny hand
With love’s invisible sceptre laden ;
I am thine Esther to command
Till thou shalt find a queen-handmaiden,
Philip my king.

O the day when thou goest a wooing,
Philip my king !
When those beautiful lips ’gin suing,
And some gentle heart’s bars undoing
Thou dost enter, love-crowned, and there
Sittest love-glorified. Rule kindly,
Tenderly, over thy kingdom fair,
For we that love, ah ! we love so blindly,
Philip my king.

Up from thy sweet mouth—up to thy brow,
Philip my king !
The spirit that there lies sleeping now
May rise like a giant and make men bow
As to one Heaven-chosen amongst his peers :
My Saul, than thy brethren taller and fairer

Let me behold thee in future years ;—
Yet thy head needeth a circlet rarer,
Philip my king.

—A wreath not of gold, but palm. One day,
Philip my king,
Thou too must tread, as we trod, a way
Thorny and cruel and cold and gray :
Rebels within thee and foes without,
Will snatch at thy crown. But march on, glorious,
Martyr, yet monarch : till angels shout,
As thou sitt'st at the feet of God victorious,
“ Philip the king !”

PLIGHTED.

MINE to the core of the heart, my beauty !
Mine, all mine, and for love, not duty :
Love given willingly, full and free,
Love for love's sake—as mine to thee.

Duty's a slave that keeps the keys,
But Love, the master, goes in and out
Of his goodly chambers with song and shout,
Just as he please—just as he please.

Mine, from the dear head's crown, brown-golden,
To the silken foot that's scarce beholden ;
Give to a few friends hand or smile,
Like a generous lady, now and awhile,
But the sanctuary heart, that none dare win,
Keep holiest of holiest evermore ;
The crowd in the aisles may watch the door,
The high-priest only enters in.

Mine, my own, without doubts or terrors,
 With all thy goodnesses, all thy errors,
 Unto me and to me alone revealed,
 “A spring shut up, a fountain sealed.”

Many may praise thee—praise mine as thine,
 Many may love thee—I’ll love them too ;
 But thy heart of hearts, pure, faithful, and true,
 Must be mine, mine wholly, and only mine.

Mine !—God, I thank Thee that Thou hast given
 Something all mine on this side heaven :
 Something as much myself to be
 As this my soul which I lift to Thee :

Flesh of my flesh, bone of my bone,
 Life of my life, whom Thou dost make
 Two to the world for the world’s work’s sake—
 But each unto each, as in Thy sight, *one*

NOW AND AFTERWARDS.

“Two hands upon the breast, and labour is past.”

Russian Proverb.

“**T**WO hands upon the breast,
 And labour’s done ;
 Two pale feet crossed in rest—
 The race is won ;
 Two eyes with coin-weights shut,
 And all tears cease ;
 Two lips where grief is mute,
 Anger at peace ;”—
 So pray we oftentimes, mourning our lot :
 God in His kindness answereth not.

“ Two hands to work addressed
 Aye for His praise ;
 Two feet that never rest
 Walking His ways ;
 Two eyes that look above
 Through all their tears ;
 Two lips still breathing love,
 Not wrath, nor fears ;”
 So pray we afterwards, low on our knees ;
 Pardon those erring prayers ! Father, hear these !

A DEAD BABY.

LITTLE soul, for such brief space that entered
 In this little body straight and chilly,
 Little life that fluttered and departed,
 Like a moth from an unopened lily,
 Little being, without name or nation,
 Where is now thy place among creation ?

Little dark-lashed eyes, unclosèd never,
 Little mouth, by earthly food ne'er tainted,
 Little breast, that just once heaved, and settled
 In eternal slumber, white and sainted,—
 Child, shall I in future children's faces
 See some pretty look that thine retraces ?

Is this thrill that strikes across my heart-string,
 And in dew beneath my eyelid gathers,
 Token of the bliss thou mightst have brought me,
 Dawning of the love they call a father's ?
 Do I hear through this still room a sighing
 Like thy spirit, to me its author crying ?

Whence didst come and whither take thy journey,
 Little soul, of me and mine created ?
 Must thou lose us, and we thee, forever,
 O strange life, by minutes only dated ?
 Or new flesh assuming, just to prove us,
 In some other babe return and love us ?

Idle questions all : yet our beginning,
 Like our ending, rests with the Life-sender,
 With whom naught is lost, and naught spent vainly :
 Unto Him this little one I render.
 Hide the face—the tiny coffin cover :
 So, our first dream, our first hope—is over.

OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY.

A LITTLE bird flew my window by,
 'Twixt the level street and the level sky,
 The level rows of houses tall,
 The long low sun on the level wall ;
 And all that the little bird did say
 Was, “Over the hills and far away.”

A little bird sang behind my chair,
 From the level line of cornfields fair,
 The smooth green hedgerow's level bound
 Not a furlong off—the horizon's bound,
 And the level lawn where the sun all day
 Burns :—“Over the hills and far away.”

A little bird sings above my bed,
 And I know if I could but lift my head

I would see the sun set, round and grand,
Upon level sea and level sand,
While beyond the misty distance gray
Is "Over the hills and far away."

I think that a little bird will sing
Over a grassy mound, next spring,
Where something that once was *me*, ye'll leave
In the level sunshine, morn and eve:
But I shall be gone, past night, past day,
Over the hills and far away.

AN EVENING GUEST.

IF in the silence of this lonely eve,
With the street lamp pale flickering on the wall,
An angel were to whisper me—"Believe—
It shall be given thee. Call!"—whom should I call?

And then I were to see thee gliding in
Clad in known garments, that with empty fold
Lie in my keeping, and my fingers, thin
As thine were once, to feel in thy safe hold:

I should fall weeping on thy neck and say,
"I have so suffered since—since"—But my tears
Would stop, remembering how thou count'st thy day,
A day that is with God a thousand years.

Then what are these sad days, months, years of mine,
To thine eternity of full delight?
What my whole life, when myriad lives divine
May wait, each leading to a higher height?

I lose myself—I faint. Beloved, best,
 Let me still dream, thy dear humanity
 Sits with me here, my head upon thy breast,
 And then I will go back to heaven with thee.

TOO LATE.

“ Douglas, Douglas, tender and true.”

COULD ye come back to me, Douglas, Douglas,
 In the old likeness that I knew,
 I would be so faithful, so loving, Douglas,
 Douglas, Douglas, tender and true.

Never a scornful word should grieve ye,
 I’d smile on ye sweet as the angels do ;—
 Sweet as your smile on me shone ever,
 Douglas, Douglas, tender and true.

O to call back the days that are not !
 My eyes were blinded, your words were few :
 Do you know the truth now up in heaven,
 Douglas, Douglas, tender and true ?

I never was worthy of you, Douglas ;
 Not half worthy the like of you :
 Now all men beside seem to me like shadows—
 I love *you*, Douglas, tender and true.

Stretch out your hand to me, Douglas, Douglas,
 Drop forgiveness from heaven like dew ;
 As I lay my heart on your dead heart, Douglas,
 Douglas, Douglas, tender and true.

Jean Ingelow.

A DEAD YEAR.

I TOOK a year out of my life and story—
A dead year, and said, “I will hew thee a tomb !

‘ All the kings of the nations lie in glory ;’
Cased in cedar, and shut in a sacred gloom ;
Swathed in linen, and precious unguents old ;
Painted with cinnabar, and rich with gold.

“ Silent they rest, in solemn salvatory,
Sealed from the moth and the owl and the flitter-mouse—
Each with his name on his brow.

‘ All the kings of the nations lie in glory,
Every one in his own house :’
Then why not thou ?

‘ Year,’ I said, “ thou shalt not lack
Bribes to bar thy coming back ;
Doth old Egypt wear her best
In the chambers of her rest ?
Doth she take to her last bed
Beaten gold, and glorious red ?
Envy not ! for thou wilt wear
In the dark a shroud as fair ;
Golden with the sunny ray
Thou withdrawest from my day ;
Wrought upon with colours fine,
Stolen from this life of mine :
Like the dusty Lybian kings,
Lie with two wide open wings

On thy breast, as if to say,
 On these wings hope flew away.
 And so housed, and thus adorned,
 Not forgotten, but not scorned,
 Let the dark for evermore
 Close thee when I close the door ;
 And the dust for ages fall
 In the creases of thy pall ;
 And no voice nor visit rude
 Break thy sealèd solitude.”

I took the year out of my life and story,
 The dead year, and said, “ I have hewed thee a tomb !
 ‘ All the kings of the nations lie in glory ;’
 Cased in cedar, and shut in a sacred gloom ;
 But for the sword, and the sceptre, and diadem,
 Sure thou didst reign like them.”
 So I laid her with those tyrants old and hoary,
 According to my vow ;
 For I said, “ The kings of the nations lie in glory,
 And so shalt thou !”

“ Rock,” I said, “ thy ribs are strong,
 That I bring thee, guard it long ;
 Hide the light from buried eyes—
 Hide it, lest the dead arise.”
 “ Year,” I said, and turned away,
 “ I am free of thee this day ;
 All that we two only know,
 I forgive and I forego ;
 So thy face no more I meet,
 In the field or in the street.”

Thus we parted, she and I ;
Life hid death, and put it by ;
Life hid death, and said, “ Be free !
I have no more need of thee.”
No more need ! O, mad mistake,
With repentance in its wake !
Ignorant, and rash, and blind ;
Life had left the grave behind ;
But had locked within its hold,
With the spices and the gold,
All she had to keep her warm
In the raging of the storm.

Scarce the sunset bloom was gone,
And the little stars outshone,
Ere the dead year, stiff and stark,
Drew me to her in the dark ;
Death drew life to come to her,
Beating at her sepulchre,
Crying out, “ How can I part
With the best share of my heart ;
Lo, it lies upon the bier,
Captive, with the buried year.
O my heart ! ” And I fell prone,
Weeping at the sealèd stone ;
“ Year among the shades,” I said,
“ Since I live, and thou art dead,
Let my captive heart be free,
Like a bird to fly to me.”
And I stayed some voice to win,
But none answered from within ;
And I kissed the door,—and night
Deepened till the stars waxed bright :

And I saw them set and wane,
And the world turn green again.

“So,” I whispered, “open door
I must tread this palace floor ;
Sealèd palace, rich and dim—
Let a narrow sunbeam swim
After me, and on me spread
While I look upon my dead ;
Let a little warmth be free
To come after ; let me see
Through the doorway when I sit
Looking out, the swallows flit,
Settling not till daylight goes ;
Let me smell the wild white rose,
Smell the woodbine and the may ;
Mark, upon a sunny day,
Sated from their blossoms, rise
Honey-bees and butterflies.

Let me hear, O ! let me hear,
Sitting by my buried year,
Finches chirping to their young,
And the little noises flung
Out of clefts where rabbits play,
Or from falling water spray ;
And the gracious echoes woke
By man’s work : the woodman’s stroke,
Shout of shepherd, whistlings blithe,
And the whetting of the scythe ;
Let this be, lest, shut and furled
From the well belovèd world,
I forget her yearnings old,
And her troubles manifold ;

Strivings sore, submissions meet,
 And my pulse no longer beat,
 Keeping time and bearing part
 With the pulse of her great heart.

“ So ; swing open door, and shade
 Take me ; I am not afraid,
 For the time will not be long ;
 Soon I shall have waxen strong—
 Strong enough my own to win
 From the grave it lies within.”
 And I entered. On her bier
 Quiet lay the buried year ;
 I sat down where I could see
 Life without, and sunshine free,
 Death within. And I between,
 Waited my own heart to wean
 From the shroud that shaded her
 In the rock-hewn sepulchre ;
 Waited till the dead should say,
 “ Heart be free of me this day”—
 Waited with a patient will—
 AND I WAIT BETWEEN THEM STILL.

I take the year back to my life and story,
 The dead year, and say, “ I will share in thy tomb.
 ‘ All the kings of the nations lie in glory ;’
 Cased in cedar, and shut in a sacred gloom ;
 They reigned in their lifetime with sceptre and diadem,
 But thou excellest them ;
 For life doth make thy grave her oratory,
 And the crown is still on thy brow ;
 ‘ All the kings of the nations lie in glory,’
 And so dost thou.”

THE HIGH TIDE ON THE COAST OF LINCOLNSHIRE.

(1571.)

THE old mayor climbed the belfry tower,
The ringers ran by two, by three ;
“ Pull, if ye never pulled before ;
Good ringers, pull your best,” quoth he.
“ Play uppe, play uppe, O Boston bells !
Ply all your changes, all your swells,
Play uppe ‘ The Brides of Enderby.’ ”

Men say it was a stolen tyde—
The Lord that sent it, He knows all ;
But in myne ears doth still abide
The message that the bells let fall :
And there was naught of strange, beside
The flights of mews and peewits pied
By millions crouched on the old sea wall.

I sat and spun within the doore,
My thread brake off, I raised myne eyes ;
The level sun, like ruddy ore,
Lay sinking in the barren skies ;
And dark against day’s golden death
She moved where Lindis wandereth,
My sonne’s faire wife, Elizabeth.

“ Cusha ! Cusha ! Cusha !” calling,
Ere the early dews were falling,
Farre away I heard her song.
“ Cusha ! Cusha !” all along ;

Where the reedy Lindis floweth,
 Floweth, floweth,
 From the meads where melick growtheth
 Faintly came her milking song.—

“Cusha ! Cushà ! Cusha !” calling,
 “For the dews will soone be falling ;
 Leave your meadow grasses mellow,
 Mellow, mellow ;
 Quit your cowslips, cowslips yellow ;
 Come uppe Whitefoot, come uppe Lightfoot,
 Quit the stalks of parsley hollow,
 Hollow, hollow ;
 Come uppe Jetty, rise and follow,
 From the clovers lift your head ;
 Come uppe Whitefoot, come uppe Lightfoot,
 Come uppe Jetty, rise and follow,
 Jetty, to the milking shed.”

If it be long, aye, long ago,
 When I beginne to think howe long,
 Againe I hear the Lindis flow,
 Swift as an arrowe, sharpe and strong ;
 And all the aire it seemeth mee
 Bin full of floating bells (sayth shee),
 That ring the tune of Enderby.

Alle fresh the level pasture lay,
 And not a shadowe mote be seene,
 Save where full fyve good miles away
 The steeple towered from out the greene.
 And lo ! the great bell farre and wide
 Was heard in all the country side
 That Saturday at eventide.

The swannerds where their sedges are
Moved on in sunset's golden breath,
The shepherde lads I heard afarre,
And my sonne's wife, Elizabeth ;
Till floating o'er the grassy sea
Came downe that kyndly message free,
The "Brides of Mavis Enderby."

Then some looked uppe into the sky,
And all along where Lindis flows
To where the goodly vessels lie,
And where the lordly steeple shows.
They sayde, " And why should this thing be,
What danger lowers by land or sea ?
They ring the tune of Enderby !

" For evil news from Mablethorpe,
Of pyrate galleys warping down ;
For shippes ashore beyond the scorpe,
They have not spared to wake the towne ;
But while the west bin red to see,
And storms be none, and pyrates flee,
Why ring ' The Brides of Enderby ? ' "

I looked without, and lo ! my sonne
Came riding downe with might and main ;
He raised a shout as he drew on,
Till all the welkin rang again,
" Elizabeth ! Elizabeth ! "
(A sweeter woman ne'er drew breath
Than my sonne's wife, Elizabeth.)

" The olde sea wall (he cried) is downe,
The rising tide comes on apace,

And boats adrift in yonder towne
Go sailing uppe the market-place.”
He shook as one that looks on death :
“ God save you, mother !” straight he saith ;
“ Where is my wife, Elizabeth ?”

“ Good sonne, where Lindis winds away
With her two bairns I marked her long ;
And ere yon bells beganne to play .
Afar I heard her milking song.”
He looked across the grassy sea,
To right, to left, “ Ho Enderby !”
They rang “ The Brides of Enderby !”

With that he cried and beat his breast ;
For lo ! along the river’s bed
A mighty eygre reared his crest,
And uppe the Lindis raging sped.
It swept with thunderous noise, loud ;
Shaped like a curling snow-white cloud,
Or like a demon in a shroud.

And rearing Lindis backward pressed,
Shook all her trembling bankes amaine ;
Then madly at the eygre’s breast
Flung uppe her weltering walls again.
Then bankes came downe with ruin and rout—
Then beaten foam flew round about—
Then all the mighty floods were out.

So farre, so fast the eygre drove,
The heart had hardly time to beat,
Before a shallow seething wave
Sobbed in the grasses at oure feet :

The feet had hardly time to flee
Before it brake against the knee,
And all the world was in the sea.

Upon the roofe we sate that night,
The noise of bells went sweeping by :
I marked the lofty beacon-light
Stream from the church tower, red and high—
A lurid mark and dread to see ;
And awsome bells they were to mee,
That in the dark rang “Enderby.”

They rang the sailor lads to guide
From roofe to roofe who fearless rowed ;
And I--my sonne was at my side,
And yet the ruddy beacon glowed :
And yet he moaned beneath his breath,
“O come in life, or come in death !
O lost ! my love, Elizabeth.”

And didst thou visit him no more ?
Thou didst, thou didst, my daughter deare ;
The waters laid thee at his doore,
Ere yet the early dawn was clear.
Thy pretty bairns in fast embrace,
The lifted sun shone on thy face,
Downe drifted to thy dwelling-place.

That flow strewed wrecks about the grass,
That ebbe swept out the flocks to sea ;
A fatal ebbe and flow, alas !
To manye more than myne and me :
But each will mourn his own (she saith).

And sweeter woman ne'er drew breath
Than my sonne's wife, Elizabeth.

I shall never hear her more
By the reedy Lindis shore,
“Cusha, Cusha, Cusha!” calling,
Ere the early dews be falling;
I shall never hear her song,
“Cusha, Cusha!” all along,
Where the sunny Lindis floweth,
Goeth, floweth;
From the meads where melick growtheth,
When the water winding down,
Onward floweth to the town.

I shall never see her more
Where the reeds and rushes quiver,
Shiver, quiver;
Stand beside the sobbing river,
Sobbing, throbbing, in its falling,
To the sandy lonesome shore;
I shall never hear her calling,
“Leave your meadow grasses mellow,
Mellow, mellow;
Quit your cowslips, cowslips yellow;
Come uppe Whitefoot, come uppe Lightfoot;
Quit your pipes of parsley hollow,
Hollow, hollow;
Come uppe Lightfoot, rise and follow;
Lightfoot, Whitefoot,
From your clovers lift the head;
Come uppe Jetty, follow, follow,
Jetty, to the milking-shed.”

SONGS OF SEVEN.

SEVEN TIMES ONE.—EXULTATION.

THREE'S no dew left on the daisies and clover,
There's no rain left in heaven :
I've said my "seven times" over and over,
Seven times one are seven.

I am old, so old, I can write a letter ;
My birthday lessons are done ;
The lambs play always, they know no better ;
They are only one times one.

O moon ! in the night I have seen you sailing
And shining so round and low ;
You were bright ! ah bright ! but your light is failing—
You are nothing now but a bow.

You moon, have you done something wrong in heaven
That God has hidden your face ?
I hope if you have you will soon be forgiven,
And shine again in your place.

O velvet bee, you're a dusty fellow,
You've powdered your legs with gold !
O brave marsh-mary buds, rich and yellow,
Give me your money to hold !

O columbine, open your folded wrapper,
Where two twin turtle-doves dwell !
O cuckoo-pint, toll me the purple clapper
That hangs in your clear green bell !

And show me your nest with the young ones in it ;
I will not steal them away ;
I am old ! you may trust me, linnet, linnet—
I am seven times one to-day.

SEVEN TIMES TWO.—ROMANCE.

You bells in the steeple, ring, ring out your changes,
How many soever they be,
And let the brown meadow-lark's note as he ranges
Come over, come over to me.

Yet birds' clearest carol by fall or by swelling
No magical sense conveys,
And bells have forgotten their old art of telling
The fortune of future days.

“ Turn again, turn again,” once they rang cheerily,
While a boy listened alone ;
Made his heart yearn again, musing so wearily
All by himself on a stone.

Poor bells ! I forgive you ; your good days are over,
And mine they are yet to be ;
No listening, no longing shall aught, aught discover :
You leave the story to me.

The foxglove shoots out of the green matted heather
And hangeth her hoods of snow ;
She was idle, and slept till the sunshiny weather :
O children take long to grow.

I wish, and I wish that the spring would go faster,
 Nor long summer bide so late ;
 And I could grow on like the foxglove and aster,
 For some things are ill to wait.

I wait for the day when dear hearts shall discover,
 While dear hands are laid on my head ;
 “ The child is a woman, the book may close over,
 For all the lessons are said.”

I wait for my story—the birds cannot sing it,
 Not one, as he sits on the tree ;
 The bells cannot ring it, but long years, O bring it !
 Such as I wish it to be.

SEVEN TIMES THREE.—LOVE.

I LEANED out of window, I smelt the white clover,
 Dark, dark was the garden, I saw not the gate ;
 “ Now, if there be footsteps, he comes, my one lover—
 Hush, nightingale, hush ! O, sweet nightingale, wait
 Till I listen and hear
 If a step draweth near,
 For my love he is late !

“ The skies in the darkness stoop nearer and nearer,
 A cluster of stars hangs like fruit in the tree,
 The fall of the water comes sweeter, comes clearer :
 To what art thou listening, and what dost thou see ?
 Let the star-clusters glow,
 Let the sweet waters flow,
 And cross quickly to me.

“ You night-moths that hover where honey brims over
 From sycamore blossoms, or settle or sleep ;
 You glow-worms shine out, and the pathway discover
 To him that comes darkling along the rough steep.

 Ah, my sailor, make haste,
 For the time runs to waste,
 And my love lieth deep—

“ Too deep for swift telling : and yet, my one lover,
 I’ve conned thee an answer, it waits thee to-night.”
 By the sycamore passed he, and through the white clover,
 Then all the sweet speech I had fashioned took flight ;
 But I’ll love him more, more
 Than e’er wife loved before,
 Be the days dark or bright.

SEVEN TIMES FOUR.—MATERNITY.

HEIGH HO ! daisies and buttercups,
 Fair yellow daffodils, stately and tall,
 When the wind wakes how they rock in the grasses,
 And dance with the cuckoo-buds, slender and small :
 Here’s two bonny boys, and here’s mother’s own lasses,
 Eager to gather them all.

Heigh ho ! daisies and buttercups :
 Mother shall thread them a daisy chain ;
 Sing them a song of the pretty hedge-sparrow,
 That loved her brown little ones, loved them full fain ,
 Sing, “ Heart thou art wide though the house be but nar-
 row ”—
 Sing once, and sing it again.

Heigh ho ! daisies and buttercups,
Sweet wagging cowslips, they bend and they bow ;
A ship sails afar over warm ocean waters,
And haply one musing doth stand at her prow.
O bonny brown sons, and O sweet little daughters,
Maybe he thinks on you now !

Heigh ho ! daisies and buttercups,
Fair yellow daffodils, stately and tall ;
A sunshiny world full of laughter and leisure,
And fresh hearts unconscious of sorrow and thrall,
Send down on their pleasure smiles passing its measure—
God that is over us all !

SEVEN TIMES FIVE.—WIDOWHOOD.

I SLEEP and rest, my heart makes moan
Before I am well awake ;
“ Let me bleed ! O let me alone,
Since I must not break ! ”

For children wake, though fathers sleep,
With a stone at foot and at head :
O sleepless God, forever keep,
Keep both living and dead !

I lift mine eyes, and what to see
But a world happy and fair ;
I have not wished it to mourn with me—
Comfort is not there.

O what anear but golden brooms,
And a waste of reedy rills ;
O what afar but the fine glooms
On the rare blue hills !

I shall not die, but live forlore—
 How bitter it is to part!
 O to meet thee, my love, once more!—
 O my heart, my heart!

No more to hear, no more to see!
 O that an echo might wake
 And waft one note of thy psalm to me
 Ere my heart-strings break!

I should know it, how faint soe'er,
 And with angel voices blent;
 O once to feel thy spirit anear,
 I could be content!

Or once between the gates of gold,
 While an angel entering trod,
 But once—thee sitting to behold
 On the hills of God.

SEVEN TIMES SIX.—GIVING IN MARRIAGE.

To bear, to nurse, to rear,
 To watch, and then to lose:
 To see my bright ones disappear,
 Drawn up like morning dews—
 To bear, to nurse, to rear,
 To watch, and then to lose:
 This have I done when God drew near,
 Among His own to choose.

To hear, to heed, to wed,
 And with thy lord depart

In tears that he, as soon as shed,
 Will let no longer smart.—
 To hear, to heed, to wed,
 This while thou didst I smiled,
 For now it was not God who said,
 “Mother, give me thy child.”

O fond, O fool, and blind,
 To God I gave with tears,
 But when a man like grace would find
 My soul put by her fears—
 O fond, O fool, and blind,
 God guards in happier spheres ;
 That man will guard where he did bind,
 Is hope for unknown years.

To hear, to heed, to wed,
 Fair lot that maidens choose,
 Thy mother’s tenderest words are said,
 Thy face no more she views ;
 Thy mother’s lot, my dear,
 She doth in naught accuse ;
 Her lot to bear, to nurse, to rear,
 To love—and then to lose.

SEVEN TIMES SEVEN.—LONGING FOR HOME.

I.

A SONG of a boat :—
 There was once a boat on a billow :
 Lightly she rocked to her port remote,
 And the foam was white in her wake like snow,

And her frail mast bowed when the breeze would blow.
And bent like a wand of willow.

II.

I shaded mine eyes one day when a boat
Went courtesying over the billow,
I marked her course till, a dancing mote,
She faded out on the moonlit foam,
And I stayed behind in the dear loved home,
And my thoughts all day were about the boat,
And my dreams upon the pillow.

III.

I pray you hear my song of a boat,
For it is but short :—
My boat, you shall find none fairer afloat,
In river or port.
Long I looked out for the lad she bore,
On the open desolate sea,
And I think he sailed to the heavenly shore,
For he came not back to me—
Ah me!

IV.

A song of a nest :—
There was once a nest in a hollow,
Down in the mosses and knot-grass pressed,
Soft and warm, and full to the brim ;
Vetches leaned over it purple and dim,
With buttercup buds to follow.

V.

I pray you hear my song of a nest,
For it is not long :—

You shall never light in a summer quest
 The bushes among—
 Shall never light on a prouder sitter,
 A fairer nestful, nor ever know
 A softer sound than their tender twitter,
 That wind-like did come and go.

VI.

I had a nestful once of my own,
 Ah happy, happy I ;
 Right dearly I loved them : but when they were grown,
 They spread out their wings to fly—
 O, one after one they flew away
 Far up to the heavenly blue,
 To the better country, the upper day,
 And—I wish I was going too.

VII.

I pray you, what is the nest to me,
 My empty nest ?
 And what is the shore where I stood to see
 My boat sail down to the west ?
 Can I call that home where I anchor yet,
 Though my good man has sailed ?
 Can I call that home where my nest was set,
 Now all its hope hath failed ?
 Nay, but the port where my sailor went,
 And the land where my nestlings be :
 There is the home where my thoughts are sent,
 The only home for me—
 Ah me !

Christina Rossetti.

LOVE FROM THE NORTH.

I HAD a love in soft south land,
Beloved through April far in May ;
He waited on my lightest breath,
And never dared to say me nay.

He saddened if my cheer was sad,
But gay he grew if I was gay ;
We never differed on a hair,
My yes his yes, my nay his nay.

The wedding hour was come, the aisles
Were flushed with sun and flowers that day ;
I pacing balanced in my thoughts :
“ It’s quite too late to think of nay.”—

My bridegroom answered in his turn,
Myself had almost answered “ Yea :”
When through the flashing nave I heard
A struggle and resounding “ Nay.”

Bridemaids and bridegroom shrank in fear,
But I stood high who stood at bay :
“ And if I answer yea, fair Sir,
What man art thou to bar with nay ?”

He was a strong man from the north,
Light-locked, with eyes of dangerous gray :
“ Put yea by for another time
In which I will not say thee nay.”

He took me in his strong white arms,
 He bore me on his horse away
 O'er crag, morass, and hairbreadth pass,
 But never asked me yea or nay.

He made me fast with book and bell,
 With links of love he makes me stay ;
 Till now I've neither heart nor power
 Nor will nor wish to say him nay.

A T H O M E.

WHEN I was dead, my spirit turned
 To seek the much frequented house :
 I passed the door, and saw my friends
 Feasting beneath green orange boughs ;
 From hand to hand they pushed the wine,
 They sucked the pulp of plum and peach ;
 They sang, they jested, and they laughed,
 For each was loved of each.

I listened to their honest chat :
 Said one : “ To-morrow we shall be
 Plod plod along the featureless sands
 And coasting miles and miles of sea.”
 Said one : “ Before the turn of tide
 We will achieve the eyrie-seat.”
 Said one : “ To-morrow shall be like
 To-day, but much more sweet.”
 To-morrow,” said they, strong with hope,
 And dwelt upon the pleasant way :

“To-morrow,” cried they one and all,
While no one spoke of yesterday,
Their life stood full at blessed noon,
I, only I, had passed away :
“To-morrow and to-day,” they cried :
I was of yesterday.

I shivered comfortless, but cast
No chill across the table-cloth ;
I all-forgotten shivered, sad
To stay, and yet to part how loath :
I passed from the familiar room,
I who from love had passed away,
Like the remembrance of a guest
That tarrieth but a day.

MAUDE CLARE.

OUT of the church she followed them
With a lofty step and mien :
His bride was like a village maid,
Maude Clare was like a queen.

“Son Thomas,” his lady mother said,
With smiles, almost with tears :
“May Nell and you but live as true
As we have done for years ;
“Your father thirty years ago
Had just your tale to tell ;
But he was not so pale as you,
Nor I so pale as Nell.”

My lord was pale with inward strife,
And Nell was pale with pride ;
My lord gazed long on pale Maude Clare
Or ever he kissed the bride.

“ Lo, I have brought my gift, my lord,
Have brought my gift,” she said :
“ To bless the hearth, to bless the board,
To bless the marriage-bed.

“ Here’s my half of the golden chain
You wore about your neck,
That day we waded ankle-deep
For lilies in the beck :

“ Here’s my half of the faded leaves
We plucked from budding bough,
With feet amongst the lily leaves,—
The lilies are budding now.”

He strove to match her scorn with scorn,
He faltered in his place :
“ Lady,” he said,—“ Maude Clare,” he said,—
“ Maude Clare :”—and hid his face.

She turned to Nell : “ My Lady Nell,
I have a gift for you ;
Though, were it fruit, the bloom were gone,
Or, were it flowers, the dew.

“ Take my share of a fickle heart,
Mine of a paltry love :
Take it or leave it as you will,
I wash my hands thereof.”

“ And what you leave,” said Nell, “ I’ll take,
And what you spurn, I’ll wear;
For he’s my lord for better and worse,
And him I love, Maude Clare.

“ Yea, though you’re taller by the head,
More wise, and much more fair;
I’ll love him till he loves me best,
Me best of all, Maude Clare.”

U P - H I L L.

DOES the road wind up-hill all the way ?
Yes, to the very end.
Will the day’s journey take the whole long day ?
From morn to night, my friend.

But is there for the night a resting-place ?
A roof for when the slow dark hours begin.
May not the darkness hide it from my face ?
You cannot miss that inn.

Shall I meet other wayfarers at night ?
Those who have gone before.
Then must I knock, or call when just in sight ?
They will not keep you standing at that door

Shall I find comfort, travel-sore and weak ?
Of labour you shall find the sum.
Will there be beds for me and all who seek ?
Yea, beds for all who come.

A PEAL OF BELLS.

STRIKE the bells wantonly,
Tinkle tinkle well;
Bring me wine, bring me flowers,
Ring the silver bell.
All my lamps burn scented oil,
Hung on laden orange-trees,
Whose shadowed foliage is the foil
To golden lamps and oranges.
Heap my golden plates with fruit,
Golden fruit, fresh-plucked and ripe
Strike the bells and breathe the pipe;
Shut out showers from summer hours—
Silence that complaining lute—
Shut out thinking, shut out pain,
From hours that cannot come again.

Strike the bells solemnly,
Ding dong deep:
My friend is passing to his bed,
Fast asleep;
There's plaited linen round his head,
While foremost go his feet—
His feet that cannot carry him.
My feast's a show, my lights are dim;
Be still, your music is not sweet,—
There is no music more for him:
His lights are out, his feast is done
His bowl that sparkled to the brim

Is drained, is broken, cannot hold ;
My blood is chill, his blood is cold ;
His death is full, and mine begun.

NOBLE SISTERS.

“ **N**OW did you mark a falcon,
Sister dear, sister dear,
Flying toward my window
In the morning cool and clear ?
With jingling bells about her neck,
But what beneath her wing ?
It may have been a ribbon,
Or it may have been a ring.”—
“ I marked a falcon swooping
At the break of day :
And for your love, my sister dove,
I 'frayed the thief away.”—

“ Or did you spy a ruddy hound,
Sister fair and tall,
Went snuffing round my garden bound,
Or crouched by my bower wall ?
With a silken leash about his neck ;
But in his mouth may be
A chain of gold and silver links,
Or a letter writ to me.”—
“ I heard a hound, highborn sister,
Stood baying at the moon :
I rose and drove him from your wall,
Lest you should wake too soon.”—

“ Or did you meet a pretty page
Sat swinging on the gate ;
Sat whistling whistling like a bird,
Or may be slept too late :
With eaglets broidered on his cap,
And eaglets on his glove ?
If you had turned his pockets out,
You had found some pledge of love.”—

“ I met him at this daybreak,
Scarce the east was red :
Lest the creaking gate should anger you,
I packed him home to bed.”—

“ Oh patience, sister. Did you see
A young man tall and strong,
Swift-footed to uphold the right
And to uproot the wrong,
Come home across the desolate sea
To woo me for his wife ?
And in his heart my heart is locked,
And in his life my life.”—

“ I met a nameless man, sister,
Hard by your chamber door :
I said : Her husband loves her much
And yet she loves him more.”—

“ Fie, sister, fie, a wicked lie,
A lie, a wicked lie,
I have none other love but him,
Nor will have till I die.
And you have turned him from our door,
And stabbed him with a lie :

I will go seek him through the world
In sorrow till I die."—

" Go seek in sorrow, sister,
And find in sorrow too :
If thus you shame our father's name,
My curse go forth with you !"

Robert Buchanan.

A LONDON IDYL.

I.

HEY, rain, rain, rain !
It patters down the glass and on the sill,
And splashes underneath, along the lane—
Then gives a kind of scream, and lies quite still
One likes to hear it, though, when one is ill ;
Rain, rain, rain, rain !
Hey, how it pours and pours !
Rain, rain, rain, rain !
A weary day for poor girls out o' doors !

II.

Ah, don't ! that kind of comfort makes me cry,
And, parson, since I'm bad, I want to die.
The roaring of the street,
The tramp, tramp, tramp of feet,
The sobbing,—sobbing, of the weary rain,
Have gone into the aching of my brain.
I'm lost and weak, and can no longer bear
To wander like a shadow here and there—

As useless as a stone—tired out—and sick !
 So that they put me down to slumber quick,
 It does not matter where.
 No one will miss me ; all will hurry by,
 And never cast a thought on one so low ;
 Fine gentles miss fine ladies when they go,
 But folk care naught for such a thing as I.

III.

Tis bad, I know, to talk like that—too bad !
 Joe, though he's often hard, is strong and true—
 (Ah, Joe meant well !) and there's the Baby too
 But I'm so tired and sad !
 I'm glad it was a boy, Sir, very glad.
 A man can fight along, can say his say,
 Is not looked down upon, holds up his head,
 And at a push can always earn his bread :
 Men have the best of it, in many a way.
 But ah ! 'tis hard indeed for girls to keep
 Decent and honest, tramping in the town,
 Their best but bad—made light of—beaten down—
 Forever wearying, wearying, for sleep.
 If they grow hard, go wrong, from bad to badder,
 Why, Parson dear, they're happier being blind :
 They get no thanks for being good and kind—
 The better that they are, they feel the sadder !

IV.

Nineteen ! nineteen !
 Only nineteen, and yet so old, so old !—
 I feel like fifty, Parson—I have been
 So wicked, I suppose, and life's so cold !

Ah, cruel are the wind and rain and snow,
And I've been out for years among them all :
I scarce remember being weak and small
Like Baby there—it was so long ago.
It does not seem that I was born, but woke
One day in a dark room
High up among the smoke,
And trembled at the roaring of the gloom
That hung around me (for you could not see,
The people from our window—only stone—
Deep walls, black pits and lanes—though drearily
You heard the deep streets groan);
And I was all alone, and looking out,
And listening in a dream ;
And far between the house-tops was a gleam
Of water winding silver-like about.
That was the River. It looked cool and deep.
And as I watched, I felt it slipping past,
As if it smoothly swept along in sleep,
Gleaming and gliding fast ;
And so I leaned upon the sill, and hearkened
To the strange hum, while all the roofs became
Covered with thin, sick flame,
And with a dusky thrill the River darkened ;
Till coldly, coldly, on the roofs there lightened
A pale and silver light from heaven shed,
And, with a sweep that made me sick and frightened
The yellow Moon rolled up above my head ;
And down below me groaned the noise and trade,
And O ! I felt alive, and was afraid,
And cold, and hungry, shrieking out for bread.

v.

All that is like a dream ! It don't seem *true* !
Father was dead, and mother left, you see,
To work for little brother Ned and me,
And up among the roofs we grew and grew ;
Locked in whole days, high up, while mother chared
In people's houses ; only now and then
We slipped away into the streets, and stared
At the big crowds of women and of men.
And I was six, but Ned was only three,
And thin and weak and weary ; and one day,
While mother was away,
He put his little head upon my knee,
And went to sleep, and would not stir a limb,
And looked quite strange and old ;
For when I touched him, shook him, spoke to him,
He smiled and grew so cold.
Then I was frightened and cried out, and none
Could hear me, and I sat and nursed his head,
Watching the smoky window while the Sun
Peeped in upon his face and made it red ;
And I began to cry ; till mother came,
Knelt down and screamed, and named the good God's
name,
And told me he was dead.
Well, when she put his night-gown on, and weeping
Put him among the rags upon his bed,
I thought that brother Ned was only sleeping,
And took his little hand and felt no fear ;
But when the place grew gray and cold and drear,
And the round moon came creeping, creeping, creeping.

Over the roofs, and put a silver shade
All round the cold, cold bed where he was laid,
I sobbed and was afraid.

VI.

Ah, yes, it is a dream!—for time passed by,
And I went out into the smoky air,
Fruit-selling, Parson—trudging wet or dry—
Winter and summer—weary, cold, and bare;
And when old mother laid her down to die,
And parish buried her, I did not cry,
And hardly seemed to care;
I was too hungry and too dull; beside,
The roar of streets had made me dry as dust:—
It took me all my time, howe'er I tried,
To keep my limbs alive and earn a crust;
I had no time for weeping,
And when I was not out amid the roar,
Or standing frozen at the play-house door,
Why, I was coiled upon my straw, and sleeping.
Ah, pence were hard to gain!
Some girls were pretty, too, but I was plain:
Fine ladies never stopped and looked and smiled,
And gave me money for my face's sake.
That made me hard and angry when a child,
But now it thrills my heart and makes it ache!
The pretty ones, poor things, what could they do,
Fighting and staring in the wicked town,
But go from bad to badder—down, down, down—
Being so poor and yet so pretty too?
Never could bear the like of that—ah, no!
Better had starved outright than gone so low!

For often, late at night,
A face that I had known when mild and meek
Passed by with fearful smile and painted cheek,
Gleamed in the gas, and faded out of sight.

VII.

But I've no call to boast. I might have been
As wicked, Parson dear, in my distress,
But for your friend—you know the one I mean?—
The tall pale lady in the mourning dress.
Though we were cold at first, that wore away—
She was so mild and young,
She had so soft a tongue,
And eyes to sweeten what she loved to say.
She never seemed to scorn one, no, not she,
And (what was best) she seemed as sad as me!
Not one of those that make a girl feel base,
And call her names, and talk of her disgrace,
And frighten one with thoughts of flaming hell,
And fierce Lord God, with black and angry brow,
But soft and mild, and sensible as well,
And O, I loved her, and I love her now.
She did me good for many and many a day—
More good than pence could do, I swear,
For she was poor, with little pence to spare—
Learned me to read, and quit low words—and pray.
And, Parson, though I never understood
How such a life as mine was meant for good,
And could not understand
How one she said was wicked, ever could
Go to your better land
Among a troop so grand,

I liked to hear her talk of such a place,
And thought of all the angels she was best,
Because her soft voice soothed me, and her face
Made my words gentle, put my heart to rest.

VIII.

Ah, Sir, 'twas very lonesome ! Night and day,
Save when the sweet Miss came, I was alone ;
Moved on and hunted through the streets of stone,
And even in dreams afraid to rest or stay.
Then, other girls had lads to work and strive for :
I envied them, and did not know 'twas wrong,
And often, very often, used to long
For some one I could like and keep alive for.—
Marry ? Not they !
They can't afford to be so good, you know ;
But many of them, though they step astray,
Indeed don't mean to sin so much, or go
Against what's decent. Only 'tis their way.
And many might do worse than that, may-be,
If they had ne'er a one to fill a thought—
It sounds half wicked, but poor girls like me
Must sin a little, to be good in aught.

IX.

So I was glad when I began to see
That costermongering Joe had fancied me ;
And when, one night, he took me to the play,
Over on Surrey side, and offered fair,
That we should take a little room and share
Our earnings, why, I could not answer "Nay!"

And that's a year ago ; and though I'm bad
 I've been as true to Joe as girl could be ;
 I don't complain a bit of Joe, dear lad.

Joe never, never meant but well ; and we
 Have had as fresh and fair a time, I think,
 As one could hope, since we are both so low :

Joe likes me, never gave me push or blow,
 When sober : only, he was wild in drink.
 But then, we don't mind beating when a man
 Is angry, if he likes us and keeps straight,
 Works for his bread, and does the best he can ; —
 'Tis being left and slighted that we hate.

x.

And so the Baby's come, and I shall die !
 And though 'tis hard to leave poor Baby here,
 Where folk will think him bad, and all's so drear,
 The great Lord God knows better far then I.—
 Ah, don't !—'tis kindly, but it pains me so !
 You say I'm wicked, and I want to go !—
 "God's kingdom," Parson, dear ? Ah, nay, ah, nay !
 That must be like the country—which I fear :
 I saw the country once, one summer day,
 And I would rather die in London here.

xi.

For I was sick of hunger, cold, and strife,
 And took a sudden fancy in my head
 To try the country, and to earn my bread
 Out among fields, where, I had heard, one's life,
 Was easier and brighter. So, that day,
 I took my basket up and stole away,

Early at morning. As I went along,
Trembling and loath to leave the busy place,
I felt that I was doing something wrong,
And feared to look policemen in the face.
And all was dim : the streets were gray and wet.
After a rainy night ; and all was still ;
I held my shawl around me with a chill,
And dropped my eyes from every face I met ;
Until the streets began to fade, the road
Grew fresh and clean and wide,
Fine houses where the gentlefolk abode,
And gardens full of flowers, on every side .
That made me walk the quicker—on, on, on—
As if I were asleep with half-shut eyes,
And all at once I saw, to my surprise,
The houses of the gentlefolk were gone,
And I was standing still,
Shading my face upon a high green hill,
And the bright sun was blazing,
And all the blue above me seemed to melt
To burning, flashing gold, while I was gazing
On the great smoky cloud where I had dwelt.

XII.

I'll ne'er forget that day. All was so bright
And strange ! Upon the grass around my feet
The rain had hung a million drops of light ;
The air, too, was so clear and warm and sweet,
It seemed a sin to breathe it. All around
Were hills and fields and trees that tremble through
A burning, blazing fire of gold and blue,
And there was not a sound,

Save a bird singing, singing, and a kind
Of sighing from the grass upon the ground.

I turned away, like one grown deaf and blind.
Then, with my heavy hand upon my chest,
Because the bright air pained me, trembling, sighing,
I stole into a dewy field to rest,

And O ! the green, green grass where I was lying
Was fresh and living—and the bird sang loud,
Out of a golden cloud—

And I was looking up at him, and crying !

XIII.

The hours they slipped away ; and by-and-by
The sun grew red, big shadows filled the sky,
The air grew damp with dew,
And the dark night was coming down, I knew.
Well, I was more afraid than ever then,
And felt that I should die in such a place ;—
So back to London town I turned my face,
And crept into the great black streets again ;
And when I breathed the smoke, and heard the roar,
Why, I was better, for in London here
My heart was busy, and I felt no fear.
I never saw the country any more.
And I have stayed in London, well or ill,—
I dared not stay out yonder if I could,
For one feels dead, and all looks pure and good—
I could not bear a life so bright and still.
All that I want is sleep,
Under the flags and stones, so deep, so deep !
God won't be hard on one so mean, but He
Perhaps will let a tired girl slumber sound

'There in the deep, cool darkness underground ;
And I shall waken up in time, may-be,
Better and stronger, not afraid to see
The great still light that folds Him round and round.

XIV.

See ! there's a bit of sunshine through the pane—
How cool and moist it looks amid the rain !
I like to hear the splashing of the drops
On the house-tops,
And the loud humming of the folk that go
Along the streets below !
I like the smoke and roar—I am so bad—
They make a low one hard, and still her cares. . . .
There's Joe ! I hear his foot upon the stairs !—
He must be wet, poor lad !
He will be angry, like enough, to find
Another little life to clothe and keep ;
But show him baby, Parson—speak him kind—
And tell him Doctor thinks I'm going to sleep.
A hard, hard life is his—he need be strong
And rough, to earn his bread and get along ;—
I think he will be sorry when I go,
And leave the little one and him behind .
I hope he'll see another to his mind,
To keep him straight and tidy. Poor old Joe !

THE NAIAD.

I.

DIAN white-armed has given me this cool shrine,
 Deep in the bosom of a wood of pine :
 The silver-sparkling showers
 That hive me in, the flowers
 That prink my fountain's brim, are hers and mine ;
 And when the days are mild and fair,
 And grass is springing, buds are blowing,
 Sweet it is, mid waters flowing,
 Here to sit, and know no care,
 Mid the waters flowing, flowing, flowing.
 Combing my yellow, yellow hair.

II.

The ounce and panther down the mountain-side
 Creep through dark greenness in the eventide ;
 And at the fountain's brink,
 Casting great shades, they drink,
 Gazing upon me, tame and sapphire-eyed ;
 For, awed by my pale face, whose light
 Gleameth through sedge and lilies yellow,
 They, lapping at my fountain mellow,
 Harm not the lamb that in affright
 Throws in the pool so mellow, mellow, mellow,
 Its shadow small and dusky-white.

III.

Oft do the fauns and satyrs, flushed with play,
 Come to my coolness in the hot noonday.

Nay, once indeed, I vow
 By Dian's truthful brow,
 The great god Pan himself did pass this way,
 And, all in festal oak-leaves clad,
 His limbs among these lilies throwing,
 Watched the silver waters flowing,
 Listened to their music glad,
 Saw and heard them flowing, flowing, flowing,
 And ah ! his face was worn and sad !

IV.

Mild joys around like silvery waters fall ;
 But it is sweetest, sweetest far of all,
 In the calm summer night,
 When the tree-tops look white,
 To be exhaled in dew at Dian's call,
 Among my sister-clouds to move
 Over the darkness earth-bedimming,
 Milky-robed through heaven swimming,
 Floating round the stars above,
 Swimming proudly, swimming, proudly swimming,
 And waiting on the Moon I love.

V.

So tenderly I keep this cool green shrine,
 Deep in the bosom of a wood of pine ;
 Faithful through shade and sun,
 That service due and done
 May haply earn for me a place divine
 Among the white-robed deities
 That thread through starry paths, attending

My sweet Lady, calmly wending
Through the silence of the skies,
Changing in hues of beauty never ending,
Drinking the light of Dian's eyes.

PENELOPE.

WHITHER, Ulysses, whither dost thou roam,
Rolled round with wind-led waves that render dark
The smoothly-spinning circle of the sea ?
Lo, Troy has fallen, fallen like a tower,
And the mild sunshine of degenerate days
Drops faintly on its ruins. One by one,
Swift as the sparkle of a star, the ships
Have dipped up moistly from the under-world,
And plumèd warriors, standing in their prows,
Stretching out arms to wives and little ones;
That crowd with seaward faces on the beach,
Have flung their armour off, and leaped and swum
Ere yet the homeward keels could graze the sand,
And these—the gaunt survivors of thy peers—
Have landed, shone upon by those they love,
And faded into happy, happy homes ;
While I, the lonely woman, hugging close
The comfort of thine individual fame,
Still wait and yearn and wish towards the sea ;
And all the air is hollow of my joy :
The seasons come and go, the hour-glass runs,
The day and night come punctual as of old ;
But thy deep strength is in the solemn dawn,
And thy proud step is in the plumèd noon,
And thy grave voice is in the whispering eve ;

And all the while, amid this dream of thee,
In restless resolution oceanward,
I sit and ply my sedentary task,
And fear that I am lonelier than I know.

Yea, love, I am alone in all the world ;
The past grows dark upon me where I wait,
With eyes that hunger seaward, and a cheek
Grown like the sampler coarse-complexionèd.
For in the shadow of thy coming home
I sit and weave a weary housewife's web,
Pale as the silkworm in the cone ; all day
I sit and weave this weary housewife's web,
And in the night, with fingers swift as frost,
Unweave the weary labour of the day.
Behold how I am mocked !—Suspicion
Mumbles my name between his toothless gums ;
And while I ply my sedentary task,
They come to me, mere men of hollow clay,
Gross-mouthing and stained with wine they come to me,
And whisper odious comfort, and upbraid
The love that follows thee where'er thou art,
That follows, and perchance, with thy moist cheek,
Dips on the watery bottom of the world.
They come, Ulysses, and they seek to rob
Thy glory of its weaker, wearier half.
They tell me thou art dead ; nay, they have brought
To these cold ears that bend above the web
Whispers that thou, no wiser than thy peers,
Hast plucked upon the windy plain of Troy
A flower thou shinest in a distant land,
A chambered delicacy drowsy-eyed,

Pink-lidded, wanton, like the queen who witched
The fatal apple out of Paris' palm.

And I—and I—ah me, I rise my height,
In matron majesty that melts in tears,
And chide them from me with a tongue that long
Hath lost the trick of chiding : what avails ?
They heed me not, rude men, they heed me not
And he thou leftest here to guard me well,
He, the old man, is helpless, and his eyes
Are yellow with the money-minting lie
That thou art dead. O husband, what avails ?
They gather on me, till the sense grows cold
And huddles in upon the steadfast heart ;
And they have dragged a promise from my lips
To choose a murderer of my love for thee,
To choose at will from out the rest one man
To slay me with his kisses in the dark,
Whene'er the weary web at which I work
Be woven : so, all day, I weave the web ;
And in the night, with fingers like a thief's,
Unweave the silken sorrow of the day.

The years wear on. Telemachus, thy son,
Grows sweetly to the height of all thy hope :
More woman-like than thee, less strong of limb,
Yet worthy thee ; and likest thy grave mood,
When, in old time, among these fields, thine eye
Would kindle on a battle far away,
And thy proud nostrils, drinking the mild breath
Of tannèd haycocks and of slanted sheaves,
Swell suddenly, as if a trumpet spake.

Hast thou forgotten how of old he loved
To toy with thy great beard, and sport with thee,
And how, in thy strong grasp, he leaped, and seemed
A lambkin dandled in a lion's paw ?
But change hath come, Troy is an old wife's tale,
And sorrow stealeth early on thy son,
Whom sojourn with my weeping womanhood
Hath taught too soon a young man's gentleness.
Behold now, how his burning boy-face turns
With impotent words beyond all blows of arm
On those rude men that rack thy weary wife !
Then turns to put his comfort on my cheek,
While sorrow brightens round him—as the gray
Of heaven melts to silver round a star !

Return, Ulysses, ere too late, too late :
Return, immortal warrior, return :
Return, return, and end the weary web !
For day by day I look upon the sea,
And watch each ship that dippeth like a gull
Across the long, straight line afar away
Where heaven and ocean meet ; and when the winds
Swoop to the waves, and lift them by the hair,
And the long storm-roar gathers, on my knees
I pray for thee. Lo, even now, the deep
Is garrulous of thy vessel tempest-tossed ;
And on the treeless upland gray-eyed March,
With blue and humid mantle backward blown,
Plucks the first primrose in a blustering wind.
The keels are wheeled unto the ocean-sand,
And eyes look outward for the homeward bound.
And not a marinere, or man or boy,

Scummed and salt-blooded from the boisterous sea,
Touches these shores, but straight I summon him,
And bribe with meat and drink to tell good news,
And question him of thee. But what avails ?
Thou wanderest ; and my love sits all alone,
Upon the threshold of an empty hall.

My very heart has grown a timid mouse,
Peeping out, fearful, when the house is still.
Breathless I listen through the breathless dark,
And hear the cock counting the leaden hours,
And, in the pauses of his cry, the deep
Swings on the flat sand with a hollow clang ;
And, pale and burning-eyed, I fall asleep
When, with wild hair, across the weary wave
Stares the sick Dawn that brings thee not to me.

Ulysses, come ! Ere traitors leave the mark
Of spread wine-dripping fingers on the smooth
And decent shoulders that now stoop for thee !
I am not young or happy as of old,
When, awed by thy male strength, my face grew dark
At thy grave footfall, with a serious joy,
Or when, with blushing, backward-looking face,
I came a bride to thine inclement realm,
Trembling and treading fearfully on flowers.
I am not young and beauteous as of old ;
And much I fear that when we meet, thy face
May startle darkly at the work of years,
And turn to hide a disappointed pang,
And then, with thy grave pride, subdue itself
Into such pity as is love stone-dead.

But thou, thou too, art old, dear lord—thy hair
 Is threaded with the silver foam—thy heart
 Is weary from the blows of cruel years;
 And there is many a task thy wife can do
 To soothe thy sunset season, and make calm
 Thy journey down the slow descent to Sleep.

Return, return, Ulysses, ere I die.
 Upon this desolate, desolate strand I wait,
 Wearily stooping o'er the weary web—
 An alabaster woman, whose fixed eyes
 Stare seaward, whether it be storm or calm.
 And ever, evermore, as in a dream,
 I see thee gazing hither from thy ship
 In sunset regions, where the still seas rot,
 And stretching out great arms, whose shadows fall
 Gigantic on the glassy, purple sea;
 And ever, evermore, thou comest slow,
 And evermore thy coming far away
 Aches on the burning heart-strings,—evermore
 Thou comest not, and I am tired and old.

WILLIE BAIRD.

A WINTER IDYL.

“ An old man’s tale, a tale for men gray-haired,
 Who wear, through second childhood, to the Lord.”

TIS two-and-thirty summers since I came
 To school the village lads of Inverburn.

My father was a shepherd old and poor,
 Who, dwelling ’mong the clouds on norland hills,

His tartan plaidie on, and by his side
His sheep-dog running, reddened with the winds
That whistle salty south from Polar seas.
I followed in his footsteps when a boy,
And knew by heart the mountains round our home;
But when I went to Edinglass, to learn
At college there, I looked about the place,
And heard the murmur of the busy streets
Around me, in a dream;—and only saw
The clouds that snow around the mountain-tops,
The mists that chase the phantom of the moon
In lonely mountain-tarns,—and heard the while,
Not footsteps sounding hollow to and fro,
But winds sough-soughing through the woods of pine.
Time passed; and day by day those sights and sounds
Grew fainter,—till they troubled me no more.

O Willie, Willie, are you sleeping sound?
And can you feel the stone that I have placed
Yonder above you? Are you dead, my doo?
Or did you see the shining Hand that parts
The clouds above, and becks the bonnie birds,
Until they wing away, and human eyes,
That watch them till they vanish in the blue,
Droop and grow tearful? Ay, I ken, I ken—
I'm talking folly, but I loved the child!
He was the bravest scholar in the school!
He came to teach the very dominie—
Me, with my lyart locks and sleepy heart!

O well I mind the day his mother brought
Her tiny, trembling tot with yellow hair,

Her tiny poor-clad tot, six summers old,
And left him seated lonely on a form
Before my desk. He neither wept nor gloomed ; .
But waited silently, with shoeless feet
Swinging above the floor ; in wonder eyed
The maps upon the walls, the big black-board,
The slates and books and copies, and my own
Gray hose and clumpy boots ; last, fixing gaze
Upon a monster spider's web, that filled
One corner of the whitewashed ceiling, watched
The speckled traitor jump and jink about,
Till he forgot my unfamiliar eyes,
Weary and strange and old. "Come here, my bairn !"
And timid as a lamb he seedled up.
"What do they call ye?"—"Willie," cooed the wean,
Up-peeping slyly, scraping with his feet.
I put my hand upon his yellow hair,
And cheered him kindly. Then I bade him lift
The small black bell that stands behind the door,
And ring the shouting laddies from their play.
"Run, Willie!" And he ran, and eyed the bell,
Stooped o'er it, seemed afraid that it would bite,
Then grasped it firm, and as it jingled gave
A timid cry—next laughed to hear the sound—
And ran full merry to the door and rang,
And rang, and rang, while lights of music lit
His pallid cheek, till, shouting, panting hard,
In ran the big rough laddies from their play.

Then rapping sharply on the desk, I drove
The laddies to their seats, and beckoned up
The stranger—smiling, bade him seat himself,

And hearken to the rest. Two weary hours
Buzz-buzz, boom-boom, went on the noise of schoo'
While Willie sat and listened open-mouthed ;
Till school was over, and the big and small
Flew home in flocks. But Willie stayed behind.
I beckoned to the mannock with a smile,
And took him on my knee, and cracked and talked.

First he was timid ; next, grew bashful ; next,
He warmed and told me stories of his home,
His father, mother, sisters, brothers, all ;
And how, when strong and big, he meant to buy
A gig to drive his father to the kirk ;
And how he longed to be a dominie :
Such simple prattle as I plainly see
You smile at. But to little children God
Has given wisdom and mysterious power
Which beat the mathematics. *Quærere*
Verum in sylvis Academi, Sir,
Is meet for men who can afford to dwell
Forever in a garden, reading books
Of morals and the logic. Good and well !
Give me such tiny truths as only bloom
Like red-tipped gowans at the hallanstone,
Or kindle softly, flashing bright at times,
In fuffing cottage-fires !

The laddie still
Was seated on my knee, when at the door
We heard a scrape-scare-scaping : Willie pricked
His ears and listened, then he clapped his hands—
“ Hey ! Donald, Donald, Donald ! ” [See ! the rogue
Looks up and blinks his eyes—he knows his name !]

“ Hey, Donald, Donald !” Willie cried. At that
I saw beneath me, at the door, a Dog—
The very collie dozing at your feet,
His nose between his paws, his eyes half closed.
At sight of Willie, with a joyful bark
He leaped and gambolled, eying me the while
In queer suspicion ; and the mannock peeped
Into my face, while patting Donald’s back—
“ It’s Donald ! he has come to take me home !”

An old man’s tale, a tale for men gray-haired,
Who wear, through second childhood, to the grave !
I’ll hasten on. Thenceforward Willie came
Daily to school, and daily to the door
Came Donald trotting ; and they homeward went
Together—Willie walking slow but sure,
And Donald trotting sagely by his side.
[Ay, Donald, he is dead ! be still, old man !]

What link existed, human or divine,
Between the tiny tot six summers old,
And yonder life of mine upon the hills
Among the mists and storms ? ’Tis strange, ’tis strange !
But when I looked on Willic’s face, it seemed
That I had known it in some beauteous life
That I had left behind me in the north.
This fancy grew and grew, till oft I sat—
The buzzing school around me—and would seem
To be among the mists, the tracks of rain,
Nearing the hueless silence of the snow.
Slowly and surely I began to feel
That I was all alone in all the world,
And that my mother and my father slept

Far, far away, in some forgotten kirk—
Remembered but in dreams. Alone at nights,
I read my Bible more and Euclid less.
For, mind you, like my betters, I had been
Half scoffer, half believer; on the whole,
I thought the life beyond a useless dream,
Best left alone, and shut my eyes to themes
That puzzled mathematics. But at last,
When Willie Baird and I grew friends, and thought,
Came to me from beyond my father's grave,
I found 'twas pleasant late at e'en to read
My Bible—haply, only just to pick
Some easy chapter for my pet to learn—
Yet night by night my soul was guided on,
Like a blind man some angel-hand convoys.

I cannot frame in speech the thoughts that filled
This gray old brow, the feelings dim and warm
That soothed the throbings of this weary heart!
But when I placed my hand on Willie's head,
Warm sunshine tingled from his yellow hair,
Through trembling fingers, to my blood within;
And when I looked in Willie's stainless eyes
I saw the empty ether floating gray
O'er shadowy mountains murmuring low with winds;
And often when, in his old-fashioned way,
He questioned me, I seemed to hear a voice
From far away, that mingled with the cries
Haunting the regions where the round red sun
Is all alone with God among the snow.

Who made the stars? and if within his hand
He caught and held one, would his fingers burn?

If I, the gray-haired dominie, was dug
From out a cabbage-garden such as he
Was found in? if, when bigger, he would wear
Gray homespun hose and clumsy boots like mine,
And have a house to dwell in all alone?
Thus would he question, seated on my knee,
While Donald (wheesht, old man!) stretched lyart limbs
Under my chair, contented. Open-mouthed
He hearkened to the tales I loved to tell
About Sir William Wallace and the Bruce,
And the sweet lady on the Scottish throne,
Whose crown was colder than a band of ice,
Yet seemed a sunny crown whene'er she smiled;
With many tales of genii, giants, dwarfs,
And little folk that play at jing-a-ring
On beds of harebells 'neath the silver moon;
Stories and rhymes and songs of Wonder-land:
How Tammas Ercildoune in Elfland dwelt,
How Galloway's mermaid combed her golden hair,
How Tammas Thumb stuck in the spider's web,
And fought and fought, a needle for his sword,
Dyeing his weapon in the crimson blood
Of the foul traitor with the poisoned fangs!

And when we read the Holy Book, the child
Would think and think o'er parts he loved the best;
The draught of fish, the Child that sat so wise
In the great Temple, Herod's cruel law
To slay the weans, or—oftenest of all—
The crucifixion of the Good Kind Man
Who loved the weans, and was a wean himself.
He spied of death; and were the sleepers cold

Down in the dark wet earth ? and was it God
That put the grass and flowers in the kirk-yard ?
What kind of dwelling-place was heaven above ?
And was it full of flowers ? and were there schools
And dominies there ? and was it far away ?
Then, with a look that made your eyes grow dim,
Clasping his wee white hands round Donald's neck,
" Do doggies gang to heaven ?" he would ask ;
" Would Donald gang ?" and keeked in Donald's face,
While Donald blinked with meditative gaze,
As if he knew full brawly what we said,
And pondered o'er it, wiser far than we.
But how I answered, how explained these themes,
I know not. Oft I could not speak at all.
Yet every question made me think of things
Forgotten, puzzled so, and when I strove
To reason puzzled me so much the more,
That, flinging logic to the winds, I went
Straight onward to the mark in Willie's way,
Took most for granted, laid down premises
Of Faith, imagined, gave my wit the reins,
And oft on nights at e'en, to my surprise,
Felt palpably an angel's glowing face
Glimmering down upon me, while mine eyes
Dimmed their old orbs with tears that came unbid .
To bear the glory of the light they saw.

So summer passed. Yon chestnut at the door
Scattered its burnished leaves, and made a sound
Of wind among its branches. Every day
Came Willie, seldom going home again
Till near the sunset: wet or dry he came :

Oft in the rainy weather carrying
 A big umbrella, under which he walked—
 A little fairy in a parachute,
 Blown hither, thither, at the wind's wild will.
 Pleased was my heart to see his pallid cheeks
 Were gathering rosy-posies, that his eyes
 Were softer and less sad. Then, with a gust,
 Old Winter tumbled shrieking from the hills,
 His white hair blowing in the wind.

The house

Where Willie's mother lives is scarce a mile
 From yonder hallan, if you take a cut
 Before you reach the village, crossing o'er
 Green meadows till you reach the road again ;
 But he who thither goes along the road
 Loses a reaper's mile. The summer long
 Wee Willie came and went across the fields :
 He loved the smell of flowers and grass, the sight
 Of cows and sheep, the changing stalks of wheat,
 And he was weak and small. When winter came,
 Still caring not a straw for wind or rain,
 Came Willie and the collie ; till by night
 Down fell the snow, and fell three nights and days,
 Then ceased. The ground was white and ankle-deep ;
 The window of the school was threaded o'er
 With flowers of hueless ice—Frost's unseen hands
 Pricked you from head to foot with tinging heat ;
 The shouting urchins, yonder on the green,
 Played snowballs. In the school a cheery fire
 Was kindled every day, and every day
 When Willie came he had the warmest seat,

And every day old Donald, punctual, came
To join us, after labour, in the lowe.

Three days and nights the snow had mistily fallen.
It lay long miles along the country-side,
White, awful, silent. In the keen cold air
There was a hush, a sleepless silentness,
And mid it all, upraising eyes, you felt
God's breath upon your face ; and in your blood,
Though you were cold to touch, was flaming fire,
Such as within the bowels of the earth
Burnt at the bones of ice, and wreathed them round
With grass ungrown.

One day in school I saw,
Through threaded window-panes, soft, snowy flakes
Swim with unquiet motion, mistily, slowly,
At intervals ; but when the boys were gone,
And in ran Donald with a dripping nose,
The air was clear and gray as glass. An hour
Sat Willie, Donald, and myself around
The murmuring fire, and then with tender hand
I wrapped a comforter round Willie's throat,
Buttoned his coat around him close and warm,
And off he ran with Donald, happy-eyed
And merry, leaving fairy prints of feet
Behind him on the snow. I watched them fade
Round the white curve, and, turning with a sigh,
Came in to sort the room, and smoke a pipe
Before the fire. Here, dreamingly and alone,
I sat and smoked, and in the fire saw clear
The norland mountains, white and cold with snow
That crumbled silently, and moved, and changed,-

When suddenly the air grew sick and dark,
And from the distance came a hollow sound,
A murmur like the moan of far-off seas.

I started to my feet, looked out, and knew
The winter wind was whistling from the clouds
To lash the snow-clothed plain, and to myself
I prophesied a storm before the night.
Then with an icy pain, an eldritch gleam,
I thought of Willie ; but I cheered my heart,—
“ He’s home, and with his mother, long ere this ! ”
While thus I stood, the hollow murmur grew
Deeper, the wold grew darker, and the snow
Rushed downward, whirling in a shadowy mist.
I walked to yonder door and opened it.
Whirr ! the wind swung it from me with a clang,
And in upon me with an iron-like crash
Swooped in the drift. With pinched, sharp face I gazed
Out on the storm ! Dark, dark was all ! A mist,
A blinding, whirling mist of chilly snow,
The falling and the driven ; for the wind
Swept round and round in clouds upon the earth,
And birmed the deathly drift aloft with moans,
Till all was swooning darkness. Far above
A voice was shrieking, like a human cry.

I closed the door, and turned me to the fire,
With something on my heart—a load—a sense
Of an impending pain. Down the broad lum
Came melting flakes that hissed upon the coal ;
Under my eyelids blew the blinding smoke,
And for a time I sat like one bewitched.

Still as a stone. The lonely room grew dark,
The flickering fire threw phantoms of the snow
Along the floor and on the walls around ;
The melancholy ticking of the clock
Was like the beating of my heart. But, hush !
Above the moaning of the wind I heard
A sudden scraping at the door ; my heart
Stood still and listened ; and with that there rose
An awsome howl, shrill as a dying screech,
And scrape-scrape-scrape, the sound beyond the door !
I could not think—I could not breathe—a dark,
Awful foreboding gripped me like a hand,
As opening the door I gazed straight out,
Saw nothing, till I felt against my knees
Something that moved, and heard a moaning sound—
Then, panting, moaning, o'er the threshold leaped
Donald the dog, alone, and white with snow.

Down, Donald ! down, old man !—Sir, look at him !
I swear he knows the meaning of my words,
And though he cannot speak, his heart is full !
See now ! see now ! he puts his cold black nose
Into my palm, and whines ! he knows, he knows !
Would speak, and cannot, but he minds that night !

The terror of my heart seemed choking me :
Dumbly I stared and wildly at the dog,
Who gazed into my face, and whined and moaned,
Leaped at the door, then touched me with his paws,
And lastly, gripped my coat between his teeth,
And pulled and pulled—whiles growling, whining whiles
Till, fairly maddened, in bewildered fear,

I let him drag me through the banging door
Out to the whirling storm. Bareheaded, wild,
The wind and snow-drift beating on my face,
Blowing me hither, thither, with the dog
I dashed along the road. What followed seemed
An eerie, eerie dream!—a world of snow,
A sky of wind, a whirling, howling mist
Which swam around with hundred sickly eyes;
And Donald dragging, dragging, beaten, bruised,
Leading me on to something that I feared—
An awful something, and I knew not what!
On, on, and farther on, and still the snow
Whirling, the tempest moaning! Then I mind
Of groping, groping in the shadowy light,
And Donald by me burrowing with his nose,
And whining. Next a darkness, blank and deep!
But then I mind of tearing through the storm,
Stumbling and tripping, blind and deaf and dumb,
And holding to my heart an icy load
I clutched with freezing fingers. Far away—
It seemed long miles on miles away—I saw
A yel'ow light—unto that light I tore—
And last, remember opening a door
And falling, dazzled by a blinding gleam
Of human faces and a flaming fire,
And with a crash of voices in my ears
Fading away into a world of snow.

When I awakened to myself, I lay
In my own bed at home. I started up
As from an evil dream, and looked around,
And to my side came one, a neighbour's wife,

Mother to two young lads I taught in school.
With hollow, hollow voice I questioned her,
And soon knew all: how a long night had passed
Since, with a lifeless laddie in my arms,
I stumbled horror-stricken, swooning, wild
Into a ploughman's cottage: at my side,
My coat between his teeth, a dog; and how,
Senseless and cold, I fell. Thence, when the storm
Had passed away, they bore me to my home.
I listened dumbly, catching at the sense;
But when the woman mentioned Willie's name,
And I was feared to phrase the thought that rose,
She saw the question in my tearless eyes,
And told me—he was dead!

'Twould weary you
To tell the thoughts, the fancies, and the dreams
That weighed upon me, ere I rose in bed,
But little harmed, and sent the wife away,—
Rose, slowly dressed, took up my staff, and went
To Willie's mother's cottage. As I walked,
Though all the air was calm and cold and still,
The blowing wind and dazzled snow were yet
Around about. I was bewildered-like!
Ere I had time to think, I found myself
Beside a truckle-bed, and at my side
A weeping woman. And I clinched my hands,
And looked on Willie, who had gone to sleep.

In death-gown white, lay Willie fast asleep,
His blue eyes closed, his tiny fingers clinched,
His lips apart a wee, as if he breathed,
His yellow hair kaimed back, and on his face

A smile—yet not a smile—a dim, pale light,
Such as the Snow keeps in its own soft wings.
Ay, he had gone to sleep, and he was sound !
And by the bed lay Donald, watching still,
And when I looked, he whined, but did not move.

I turned in silence, with my nails stuck deep
In my clinched palms ; but in my heart of hearts
I prayed to God. In Willie's mother's face
There was a cold and silent bitterness—
I saw it plain, but saw it in a dream,
And cared not. So I went my way, as grim
As one who holds his breath to slay himself.
What followed that is vague as was the rest :
A winter day, a landscape hushed in snow,
A weary wind, a horrid whiteness borne
On a man's shoulder, shapes in black, o'er all
The solemn clang of an iron bell,
And lastly me and Donald, standing both
Beside a tiny mound of fresh-heaped earth,
And, while around the snow began to fall
Mistily, softly, through the icy air,
Looking at one another, dumb and cold.

And Willie's dead !—that's all I comprehend—
Ay, bonnie Willie Baird has gone before :
The school, the tempest, and the eerie pain,
Seem but a dream,—and I am weary-like.
I begged old Donald hard—they gave him me—
And we have lived together in this house
Long years, with no companions. There's no need
Of speech between us. Here we dumbly bide,

But know each other's sorrow,—and we both
 Feel weary. When the nights are long and cold,
 And snow is falling as it falleth now,
 And wintry winds are moaning, here I dream
 Of Willie, and the unfamiliar life
 I left behind me on the norland hills
 “ Do doggies gang to heaven ?” Willie asked ;
 And ah ! what Solomon of modern days
 Can answer that ? Yet here at nights I sit,
 Reading the Book, with Donald at my side ;
 And stooping, with the Book upon my knee,
 I sometimes gaze in Donald's patient eyes—
 So sad, so human, though he cannot speak—
 And think he knows that Willie is at peace,
 Far, far away beyond the norland hills,
 Beyond the silence of the untrodden snow.

POET ANDREW.

O Loom, that loud art murmuring,
 What doth he hear thee say or sing ?
 Thou hummest o'er the dead one's songs,
 He cannot choose but hark ;
 His heart with tearful rapture throngs,
 But all his face grows dark.

O cottage Fire, that burnest bright,
 What pictures sees he in thy light ?
 A city's smoke, a white white face,
 Phantoms that fade and die,
 And last, the lonely burial-place
 On the windy hill hard by.

“ **T**IS near a year since Andrew went to sleep—
 A winter and a summer. Yonder bed
 Is where the boy was born, and where he died,

And yonder o'er the lowland is his grave :
 The nook of grass and gowans where in thought
 I found you standing at the set o' sun . . .
 The Lord content us—'tis a weary world.

These five-and-twenty years I've wrought and wrought
 In this same dwelling ;—hearken ! you can hear
 'The looms that whuzzle-whazzle ben the house,
 Where Jean and Mysie, lassies in their teens,
 And Jamie, and a neighbour's son beside,
 Work late and early. Andrew who is dead
 Was our first-born ; and when he crying came,
 With beaded een and pale old-farrant face,
 Out of the darkness, Mysie and mysel'
 Were young and heartsome ; and his smile, be sure,
 Made daily toil the sweeter. Hey, his kiss
 Put honey in the very porridge-pot !
 His smile strung threads of sunshine on the loom !
 And when he hung around his mother's neck,
 He decked her out in jewels and in gold
 That even ladies envied ! . . . Weel ! . . . in time
 Came other children, newer gems and gold,
 And Andrew quitted Mysie's breast for mine.
 So years rolled on, like bobbins on a loom ;
 And Mysie and mysel' had work to do,
 And Andrew took his turn among the rest,
 No sweeter, dearer ; till, one Sabbath day,
 When Andrew was a curly-pated tot
 Of sunny summers six, I had a crack
 With Mister Muckleraith the Minister
 Who put his kindly hand on Andrew's head,
 Called him a clever wean, a bonnie wean,

Clever at learning, while the mannikin
Blushed red as any rose, and peeping up
Went twinkle-twinkle with his round black een ;
And then, while Andrew laughed and ran awa',
The Minister went deeper in his praise,
And prophesied he would become in time
A man of mark. This set me thinking, Sir,
And watching,—and the mannock puzzled me.

Would sit for hours upon a stool and draw
Droll faces on the slate, while other lads
Were shouting at their play ; dumbly would lie
Beside the Lintock, sailing, piloting
Navies of docken-leaves a summer day ;
Had learned the hymns of Doctor Watts by heart.
And as for old Scots songs, could lilt them a'—
From Yarrow Braes to Bonnie Bessie Lee—
And where he learned them, only Heaven knew ;
And oft, although he feared to sleep his lane,
Would cowrie at the threshold in a storm
To watch the lightning,—as a birdie sits,
With fluttering fearsome heart and dripping wings,
Among the branches. Once, I mind it weel,
In came he, running, with a bloody nose,
Part tears, part pleasure, to his fluttering heart
Holding a callow mavis golden-billed,
The thin white film of death across its een,
And told us, sobbing, how a neighbour's son
Harried the birdie's nest, and how by chance
He came upon the thief beside the burn,
Throwing the birdies in to see them swim,
And how he fought him, till he yielded up

'This one, the one remaining of the nest ;—
And "O the birdie's dying!" sobbed he sore,
" The bonnie birdie's dying!"—till it died ;
And Andrew dug a grave behind the house,
Buried his dead, and covered it with earth,
And cut, to mark the grave, a grassy turf
Where blew a bunch of gowans. After that,
I thought and thought, and thick as bees the thoughts
Buzzed to the whuzzle-whazzling of the loom—
I could make naething of the mannikin !
But by-and-by, when Hope was making hay,
And web-work rose, I settled it, and said
To the good wife, "'Tis plain that yonder lad
Will never take to weaving—and at school
They say he beats the rest at all his tasks
Save figures only : I have settled it :
Andrew shall be a minister—a pride
And comfort to us, Mysie, in our age :
He shall to college in a year or twa
(If Fortune smiles as now) at Edinglass."
You guess the wife opened her een, cried " Foosh !"
And called the plan a silly, senseless dream,
A hopeless, useless castle in the air ;
But ere the night was out, I talked her o'er,
And here she sat, her hands upon her knees,
Glow'ring and heark'ning, as I conjured up,
Amid the fog and reek of Edinglass,
Life's peaceful gloaming and a godly fame.
So it was broached, and after many cracks
With Mister Mucklewraith, we planned it a',
And day by day we laid a penny by
To give the lad when he should quit the bield.

And years wore on ; and year on year was cheered
By thoughts of Andrew, dressed in decent black,
Throned in a Pulpit, preaching out the Word,
A house his own, and all the country-side
To touch their bonnets to him. Weel, the lad
Grew up among us, and at seventeen
His hands were genty white, and he was tall,
And slim, and narrow-shouldered : pale of face,
Silent, and bashful. Then we first began
To feel how muckle more he knew than we,
To eye his knowledge in a kind of fear,
As folk might look upon a crouching beast,
Bonnie, but like enough to rise and bite.
Up came the cloud between us silly folk
And the young lad that sat among his Books
Amid the silence of the night ; and oft
It pained us sore to fancy he would learn
Enough to make him look with shame and scorn
On this old dwelling. 'Twas his *manner*, Sir !
He seldom looked his father in the face,
And when he walked about the dwelling, seemed
Like one superior ; dumbly he would steal
To the burnside, or into Lintlin Woods,
With some new-farrant book,—and when I peeped,
Behold a book of jingling-jangling rhyme,
Fine-written nothings on a printed page ;
And, pressed between the leaves, a flower perchance,
Anemone or blue Forget-me-not,
Plucked in the grassy loanin'. Then I peeped
Into his drawer, among his papers there,
And found—you guess ?—a heap of idle rhymes,
Big-sounding, like the worthless printed book :

Some in old copies scribbled, some on scraps
Of writing-paper, others finely writ
With spirls and flourishes on big white sheets.
I clinched my teeth, and groaned. The beauteous dream
Of the good Preacher in his braw black dress,
With house and income snug, began to fade
Before the picture of a drunken loon
Bawling out songs beneath the moon and stars,—
Of poet Willie Clay, who wrote a book
About King Robert Bruce, and aye got fu',
And scattered stars in verse, and aye got fu',
Wept the world's sins, and then got fu' again,—
Of Ferguson, the feckless limb o' law,—
And Robin Burns, who gauged the whiskey-casks
And brake the seventh commandment. So at once
I up and said to Andrew, " You're a fool !
You waste your time in silly, senseless verse,
Lame as your own conceit : take heed ! take heed !
Or, like your betters, come to grief ere long !"
But Andrew flushed and never spake a word,
Yet eyed me sidelong with his beaded een,
And turned awa', and, as he turned, his look—
Half scorn, half sorrow—stang me. After that,
I felt he never heeded word of ours,
And, though we tried to teach him common-sense,
He idled as he pleased ; and many a year,
After I spake him first, that look of his
Came dark between us, and I held my tongue,
And felt he scorned me for the poetry's sake.
This coldness grew and grew, until at last
We sat whole nights before the fire and spoke
No word to one another. One fine day,

Says Mister Mucklewraith to me, says he,
 "So! you've a Poet in your house!" and smiled;
 "A Poet? God forbid!" I cried; and then
 It all came out: how Andrew slyly sent
 Verse to the paper; how they printed it
 In Poets' Corner; how the printed verse
 Had ca't a girdle in the callant's head;
 How Mistress Mucklewraith they thought half daft
 Had cut the verses out and pasted them
 In albums, and had praised them to her friends.
 I said but little; for my schemes and dreams
 Were tumbling down like castles in the air,
 And all my heart seemed hardening to stone.
 But after that, in secret stealth, I bought
 The papers, hunted out the printed verse,
 And read it like a thief; thought some were good,
 And others foolish havers, and in most
 Saw naething, neither common-sense nor sound—
 Words pottle-bellied, meaningless, and strange,
 That strutted up and down the printed page,
 Like Bailies made to bluster and look big.

'Twas useless grumbling. All my silent looks
 Were lost, all Mysie's flyting fell on ears
 Choke-full of other counsel; but we talked
 In bed o' nights, and Mysie wept, and I
 Felt stubborn, wrothful, wronged. It was to be!
 But mind you, though we mourned, we ne'er forsook
 The college scheme. Our sorrow, as we saw
 Our Andrew growing cold to homely ways,
 And scornful of the bield, but strengthened more
 Our wholesome wish to educate the lad,

And do our duty by him, and help him on
With our rough hands—the Lord would do the rest,
The Lord would mend or mar him. So at last,
New-clad from top to toe in homespun cloth,
With books and linen in a muckle trunk,
He went his way to college ; and we sat,
Mysie and me, in weary darkness here ;
For though the younger bairns were still about,
It seemed our hearts had gone to Edinglass
With Andrew, and were choking in the reek
Of Edinglass town.

It was a gruesome fight,
Both for oursel's at home, and for the boy,
That student-life at college. Hard it was
To scrape the fees together ; but beside,
The lad was young, and needed meat and drink.
We sent him meal and bannocks by the train,
And country cheeses ; and with this and that,
Though sorely pushed, he throve, though now and then
With empty wame : spinning the siller out
By teaching grammar in a school at night.
Whiles he came home : weary old-farrant face
Pale from the midnight candle ; bringing home
Good news of college. Then we shook awa'
The old sad load, began to build again
Our airy castles, and were hopeful Time
Would heal our wounds. But, Sir, they plagued me still,
Some of his ways ! When here, he spent his time
In yonder chamber, or about the woods,
And by the water-side,—and with him books
Of poetry, as of old. Mysel' could get
But little of his company or tongue ;

And when we talked, atweel, a kind of frost,—
My consciousness of silly ignorance,
And worse, my knowledge that the lad himsel'
Felt sorely, keenly, all my ignorant shame,
Made talk a torture, out of which we crept
With burning faces. Could you understand
One who was wild as if he found a mine
Of golden guineas, when he noticed first
The soft green streaks in a snowdrop's inner leaves?
And once again, the moonlight glimmering
Through watery transparent stalks of flax?
A flower's a flower! . . . But Andrew snooved about,
Aye finding wonders, mighty mysteries,
In things that ilka learless cottar kenned.
Now, 'twas the falling snow or murmuring rain;
Now, 'twas the laverock singing in the sun,
And dropping slowly to the callow young;
Now, an old tune he heard his mother lilt;
And aye those trifles made his pallid face
Flush brighter, and his een flash keener far,
Than when he heard of yonder storm in France,
Or a King's death, or, if the like had been,
A city's downfall.

He was born with love
For things both great and small; yet seemed to prize
The small things best. To me, it seemed indeed
The callant cared for nothing for itsel',
But for some special quality it had
To set him thinking, thinking, or bestow
A tearful sense he took for luxury.
He loved us in his silent fashion weel;
But in our feckless ignorance we knew

'Twas when the humour seized him—with a sense
Of some queer power we had to waken up
The poetry—ay, and help him in his rhyme !
A kind of patronizing tenderness,
A pitying pleasure in our Scottish speech
And homely ways, a love that made him note
Both ways and speech with the same curious joy
As filled him when he watched the birds and flowers.

He was as sore a puzzle to us then
As he had been before. It puzzled us,
How a big lad, down-cheeked, almost a man,
Could pass his time in silly, childish joys . . .
Until at last, a hasty letter came
From Andrew, telling he had broke awa'
From college, packed his things, and taken train
To London city, where he hoped (he said)
To make both fortune and a noble fame
Through a grand poem, carried in his trunk ;
How, after struggling on with bitter heart,
He could no longer bear to fight his way
Among the common scholars ; and the end
Bade us be hopeful, trusting God, and sure
The light of this old home would guide him still
Amid the reek of evil.

Sae it was !

We twa were less amazed than you may guess,
Though we had hoped, and feared, and hoped, sae long !
But it was hard to bear—hard, hard to bear !
Our castle in the clouds was gone for good ;
And as for Andrew—other lads had ta'en
The same mad path, and learned the bitter task

Of poortith, cold, and tears. She grat. I sat
In silence, looking on the fuffing fire,
Where streets and ghastly faces came and went,
And London city crumbled down to crush
Our Andrew; and my heart was sick and cold.
Ere long, the news across the country-side
Sped quickly, like the crowing of a cock
From farm to farm—the women talked it o'er
On doorsteps, o'er the garden rails; the men
Got fu' upon it at the public-house,
And whispered it among the fields at work.
A cry was quickly raised from house to house,
That all the blame was mine, and cankered een
Looked cold upon me, as upon a kind
Of upstart. “Fie on pride!” the whisper said,
“The fault was Andrew's less than those who taught
His heart to look in scorn on honest work,—
Shame on them!—but the lad, poor lad, would learn!”
O Sir, the thought of this spoiled many a web
In yonder—tingling, tingling in my ears,
Until I fairly threw my gloom aside,
Smiled like a man whose heart is light and young,
And with a future-kenning happy look
Threw up my chin, and bade them wait and see . . .
But, night by night, these een looked Londonways,
And saw my laddie wandering all alone
Mid darkness, fog, and reek, growing afar
To dark proportions and gigantic shape—
Just as the figure of a sheep-herd looms,
Awful and silent, through a mountain mist.

Ye aiblins ken the rest. At first, there came

Proud letters, swiftly writ, telling how folk
Now roundly called him "Poet," holding out
Bright pictures, which we smiled at wearily—
As people smile at pictures in a book,
Untrue but bonnie. Then the letters ceased,
There came a silence cold and still as frost ;—
We sat and hearkened to our beating hearts,
And prayed as we had never prayed before.
Then lastly, on the silence broke the news
That Andrew, far awa', was sick to death,
And, weary, weary of the noisy streets,
With aching head and weary, hopeless heart,
Was coming home from mist and fog and noise,
To grassy lowlands and the caller air.

'Twas strange, 'twas strange !—but this, the weary end
Of all our bonnie biggins in the clouds,
Came like a tearful comfort. Love sprang up
Out of the ashes of the household fire,
Where Hope was fluttering like the loose white film ;
And Andrew, our own boy, seemed nearer now
To this old dwelling and our aching hearts
Than he had ever been since he became
Wise with book-learning. With an eager pain,
I met him at the train, and brought him home :
And when we met that sunny day in hairst,
The ice that long had sundered us had thawed ;
We met in silence, and our een were dim.
Och, I can see that look of his this night !
Part pain, part tenderness—a weary look,
Yearning for comfort such as God the Lord
Puts into parents' een. I brought him here.

Gently we set him here beside the fire,
And spake few words, and hushed the noisy house ;
Then eyed his hollow cheeks and lustrous een,
His clammy, hueless brow and faded hands,
Blue-veined, and white like lily-flowers. The wife
Forgot the sickness of his face, and moved
With light and happy footstep but and ben,
As though she welcomed to a merry feast
A happy guest. In time, out came the truth :
Andrew was dying : in his lungs the dust
Of cities stole unseen, and hot as fire
Burnt—like a deil's red een that gazed at Death.
Too late for doctor's skill, though doctor's skill
We had in plenty ; but the ill had ta'en
Too sure a grip. Andrew was dying, dying :
The beauteous dream had melted like a mist
The sunlight feeds on : a' remaining now
Was Andrew, bare and barren of his pride,
Stark of conceit, a weel-belovèd child,
Helpless to help himsel', and dearer thus,
As when his yaumer*—like the corn-craik's cry
Heard in a field of wheat at dead o' night—
Brake on the hearkening darkness of the bield.

And as he nearer grew to God the Lord,
Nearer and dearer ilka day he grew
To Mysie and mysel'—our own to love,
The world's no longer. For the first, last time,
We twa, the lad and I, could sit and crack
With open hearts—free-spoken, at our ease ;

* *Yaumer*, a child's cry.

I seemed to know as muckle then as he,
Because I was sae sad.

Thus grief, sae deep
It flowed without a murmur, brought the balm
Which blunts the edge of worldly sense, and makes
Old people weans again. In this sad time,
We never troubled at his childish ways ;
We seemed to share his pleasure when he sat
List'ning to birds upon the eaves ; we felt
Small wonder when we found him weeping o'er
His old torn books of pencilled thoughts and verse ;
And if, outbye, I saw a bonnie flower,
I plucked it carefully and bore it home
To my sick boy. To me, it somehow seemed
His care for lovely earthly things had changed—
Changed from the curious love it once had been,
Grown larger, bigger, holier, peacefuller ;
And though he never lost the luxury
Of loving beauteous things for poetry's sake,
His heart was God the Lord's, and he was calm.
Death came to lengthen out his solemn thoughts
Like shadows to the sunset. So no more
We wondered. What is folly in a lad
Healthy and heartsome, one with work to do,
Befits the freedom of a dying man. . .
Mother, who chided loud the idle lad
Of old, now sat her sadly by his side,
And read from out the Bible soft and low,
Or lilted lowly, keeking in his face,
The old Scots songs that made his een so dim.
I went about my daily work as one
Who waits to hear a knocking at the door,

Ere Death creeps in and shadows those that watch;
 And seated here at e'en i' the ingleside,
 I watched the pictures in the fire, and smoked
 My pipe in silence; for my head was fu'
 Of many rhymes the lad had made of old
 (Rhymes I had read in secret, as I said),
 No one of which I minded till they came
 Unsummoned, buzzing-buzzing in my ears
 Like bees among the leaves.

The end drew near.

Came Winter moaning, and the Doctor said
 That Andrew couldna live to see the Spring;
 And day by day, while frost was hard at work,
 The lad grew weaker, paler, and the blood
 Came redder from the lung. One Sabbath day—
 The last of winter, for the caller air
 Was drawing sweetness from the barks of trees—
 When down the lane, I saw to my surprise
 A snowdrop blooming underneath a birk,
 And gladly plucked the flower to carry home
 To Andrew. Ere I reached the bield, the air
 Was thick wi' snow, and ben in yonder room
 I found him, Mysie seated at his side,
 Drawn to the window in the old arm-chair,
 Gazing wi' lustrous een and sickly cheek
 Out on the shower, that wavered softly down
 In glistening siller glamour. Saying naught,
 Into his hand I put the year's first flower,
 And turned awa' to hide my face; and he . . .
 . . . He smiled . . . and at the smile, I knew not why,
 It swam upon us, in a frosty pain,
 The end was come at last, at last, and Death

Was creeping ben, his shadow on our hearts.
We gazed on Andrew, called him by his name,
And touched him softly . . . and he lay awhile,
His een upon the snow, in a dark dream,
Yet neither heard nor saw ; but suddenly,
He shook awa' the vision wi' a smile,
Raised lustrous een, still smiling, to the sky,
Next upon us, then dropped them to the flower
That trembled in his hand, and murmured low,
Like one that gladly murmurs to himsel'—
“ Out of the Snow, the Snowdrop—out of Death
Comes Life ;” then closed his eyes and made a moan,
And never spake another word again.

... And you think weel of Andrew's book ? You think
That folk will love him, for the poetry's sake,
Many a year to come ? We take it kind
You speak so weel of Andrew !—As for me,
I can make naething of the printed book ;
I am no scholar, Sir, as I have said,
And Mysie there can just read print a wee.
Ay ! we are feckless, ignorant of the world !
And though 'twere joy to have our boy again,
And place him far above our lowly house,
We like to think of Andrew as he was
When, dumb and wee, he hung his gold and gems
Round Mysie's neck : or—as he is this night—
Lying asleep, his face to heaven—asleep,
Near to our hearts, as when he was a bairn,
Without the poetry and human pride
That came between us, to our grief, langsyne.

LORD RONALD'S WIFE.

I.

LAST night I tossed upon my bed,
Because I knew that she was dead :
The curtains were white, the pane was blue
 The moon peeped through,
 And its eye was red—
“I would that my love were awake !” I said.

II.

Then I rose and the silver censer lit,
 And over the rushes lightly stepped,
Crept to the door and opened it,
 And entered the room where my lady slept ;
And the censer threw a glamour gray
Over the bed on which she lay,
And sparkled on her golden hair,
Smiled on her lip and melted there,
And I shuddered because she looked so fair ;—
For the curtains were white, and the pane was blue,
 And the moon looked through,
 And its eye was red :
“I will hold her hand, and think,” I said.

III.

And at first I could not think at all,
Because her hand was so thin and cold ;
The gray light flickered along the wall,
And I seemed to be growing old ;

I looked in her face and could not weep,
I hated the sound of mine own deep breath,
Lest it should startle her from the sleep
That seemed too sweet and mild for death.
I heard the far-off clock intone
So slowly, so slowly—
Afar across the courts of stone,
The black hound shook his chain with a moan,
As the village clock chimed slowly, slowly, slowly
I prayed that she might rise in bed,
And smile and say one little word,—
“I long to see her eyes!” I said . . .
I should have shrieked if she had stirred.

IV.

I never sinned against thee, Sweet!
And yet last night, when none could see . . .
I know not . . . but from head to feet
I seemed one scar of infamy :
Perhaps because the fingers light
I held had grown so worn and white,
Perhaps because you looked so fair,
With the thin gray light on your golden hair.

V.

You were warm, and I was cold,
Yet you loved me, little one, I knew—
I could not trifle—I was old—
I was wiser, carefuller, than you ;
I liked my horse, I liked my hound,
I liked to hear the trumpet sound,

Over my wine I liked to chat,
 But soberly, for I had mina.
You wanted that, and only that,
 You were as light as is the wind.
At times, I know, it fretted me—
 I chid thee mildly now and then—
No fault of mine—no blame to thee—
 Women are women, men are men.
At first you smiled to see me frown,
 And laughing leaped upon my knee,
And kissed the chiding shadow down,
 And smoothed my great beard merrily ;
But then a change came o'er you, Sweet !
 You walked about with pensive head ;
You tried to read, and, as you read,
 Patted your small, impatient feet :—
“ She is wiser now ! ” I smiling said . . .
 And ere I doubted—you were dead.

VI.

All this came back upon my brain
 While I sat alone at your white bedside,
And I remembered in my pain
 Those words you spoke before you died—
For around my neck your arms you flung,
 And smiled so sweet, though death was near—
“ I was so foolish and so young !
 And yet I loved thee !—kiss me, dear ! ”
I put aside your golden hair,
 And kissed you, and you went to sleep ;
And when I saw that death was there,

My grief was cold, I could not weep ;
And late last night, when you were dead,
I did not weep beside your bed,
For the curtains were white, and the pane was blue,
 And the moon looked through,
 And its eye was red—
“ How coldly she lies ! ” I said.

VII.

Then loud, so loud, before I knew,
The gray and black cock screamed and crew,
And I heard the far-off bells intone
 So slowly, so slowly,
The black hound barked, and I rose with a groan,
 As the village bells chimed slowly, slowly, slowly
I dropped the hand so cold and thin ;
I gazed, and your face seemed still and wise,
And I saw the damp dull dawn stare in
 Like a dim drowned face with oozy eyes ;
And I opened the lattice quietly,
And the cold wet air came in on me,
And I plucked two roses with fingers chill
From the roses that grew at your window-sill,
I plucked two roses, a white and a red,
Stole again to the side of your bed,
Raised the edge of your winding fold,
 Dropped the roses upon your breast,
Covered them up in the balmy cold,
 That none might know—and there they rest !
And out at the castle-gate I crept
Into the woods, and then . . . I wept !

But to-day they carried you from here,
 And I followed your coffin with tearless cheek—
 They knew not about the roses, dear!—
 I would not have them think me weak.

VIII.

And I am weary on my bed
 Because I know you are cold and dead ;
 And I see you lie in darkness, Sweet !
 With the roses under your winding-sheet ;
 The days and nights are dreary and cold,
 And I am foolish, and weak, and old.

THE LEGEND OF THE STEPMOTHER.

I.

AS I lay asleep, as I lay asleep,
 Under the grass as I lay so deep,
 As I lay asleep in my cotton serk,
 Under the shade of Our Lady's Kirk,
 I wakened up in the dead of night,
 I wakened up in my death-serk white,
 And I heard a cry from far away,
 And I knew the voice of my daughter May :
 “ Mother, mother, come hither to me !
 Mother, mother, come hither and see !
 Mother, mother, mother dear,
 Another mother is sitting here :
 My body is bruised, and in pain I cry,
 On straw in the dark afraid I lie,

I thirst and hunger for drink and meat,
And mother, mother, to sleep were sweet !”
I heard the cry, though my grave was deep,
And awoke from sleep, awoke from sleep.

IL

I awoke from sleep, I awoke from sleep,
Up I rose from my grave so deep !
The earth was black, but overhead
The stars were yellow, the moon was red ;
And I walked along all white and thin,
And lifted the latch and entered in,
And reached the chamber as dark as night,
And though it was dark my face was white :
“ Mother, mother, I look on thee !
Mother, mother, you frighten me !
For your cheeks are thin and your hair is gray !”
But I smiled, and kissed her fears away ;
I smoothed her hair and I sang a song,
And on my knee I rocked her long :
“ O mother, mother, sing low to me—
I am sleepy now, and I cannot see !”
I kissed her, but I could not weep,
And she went to sleep, she went to sleep.

III.

As we lay asleep, as we lay asleep,
My May and I, in our grave so deep,
As we lay asleep in the midnight mirk,
Under the shade of our Lady’s Kirk,
I wakened up in the dead of night,
Though May my daughter lay warm and white,

And I heard the cry of a little one,
And I knew 'twas the voice of Hugh my son :
“ Mother, mother, come hither to me !
Mother, mother, come hither and see !
Mother, mother, mother dear,
Another mother is sitting here :
My body is bruised and my heart is sad,
But I speak my mind, and call them bad ;
I thirst and hunger night and day,
And were I strong I would fly away !”
I heard the cry, though my grave was deep,
And awoke from sleep, and awoke from sleep !

IV.

I awoke from sleep, I awoke from sleep,
Up I rose from my grave so deep,
The earth was black, but overhead
The stars were yellow, the moon was red ;
And I walked along all white and thin,
And lifted the latch and entered in.
“ Mother, mother, and art thou here ?
I know your face, and I feel no fear ;
Raise me, mother, and kiss my cheek,
For oh I am weary and sore and weak.”
I smoothed his hair with a mother’s joy,
And he laughed aloud, my own brave boy ;
I raised and held him on my breast,
Sang him a song, and bade him rest.
“ Mother, mother, sing low to me—
I am sleepy now, and I cannot see !”
I kissed him, and I could not weep,
As he went to sleep, as he went to sleep.

V.

As I lay asleep, as I lay asleep,
With my girl and boy in my grave so deep,—
As I lay asleep, I awoke in fear,
Awoke, but awoke not my children dear,
And heard a cry so low and weak
From a tiny voice that could not speak ;
I heard the cry of a little one,
My bairn that could neither talk nor run—
My little, little one, uncaressed,
Starving for lack of the milk of the breast ;
And I rose from sleep and entered in,
And found my little one pinched and thin,
And crooned a song and hushed its moan,
And put its lips to my white breast-bone ;
And the red, red moon that lit the place
Went white to look at the little face,
And I kissed and kissed, and I could not weep,
As it went to sleep, as it went to sleep.

VI.

As it lay asleep, as it lay asleep,
I set it down in the darkness deep,
Smoothed its limbs and laid it out,
And drew the curtains around about ;
Then into the dark, dark room I hied
Where he lay awake at the woman's side,
And though the chamber was black as night,
He saw my face, for it was so white ;
I gazed in his eyes, and he shrieked in pain,
And I knew he would never sleep again,

And back to my grave went silently,
And soon my baby was brought to me :
My son and daughter beside me rest,
My little baby is on my breast ;
Our bed is warm and our grave is deep,
But he cannot sleep, he cannot sleep !

THE FAERY FOSTER-MOTHER.

I.

BRIGHT Eyes, Light Eyes ! Daughter of a Fay !
I had not been a married wife a twelvemonth and a day,
I had not nursed my little one a month upon my knee,
When down among the blue-bell banks rose elfins three
times three :
They griped me by the raven hair, I could not cry for
fear,
They put a hempen rope around my waist and dragged me
here ;
They made me sit and give thee suck as mortal mothers
can,
Bright Eyes, Light Eyes ! strange and weak and wan !

II.

Dim Face, Grim Face ! lie ye there so still ?
Thy red, red lips are at my breast, and thou mayst suck thy
fill ;
But know ye, though I hold thee firm, and rock thee to and
fro,
'Tis not to soothe thee into sleep, but just to still my woe ?

And know ye, when I lean so calm against the wall of stone,
 Tis when I shut my eyes and try to think thou art mine
 own ?

And know ye, though my milk be here, my heart is far
 away,
 Dim Face, Grim Face ! Daughter of a Fay !

III.

Gold Hair, Cold Hair ! Daughter to a King !
 Wrapped in bands of snow-white silk with jewels glittering,
 Tiny slippers of the gold upon thy feet so thin,
 Silver cradle velvet-lined for thee to slumber in,
 Pigmy pages, crimson-haired, to serve thee on their knees,
 To bring thee toys and greenwood flowers and honey-bags
 of bees.—

I was but a peasant-lass, my babe had but the milk,
 Gold Hair, Cold Hair ! raimented in silk !

IV.

Pale Thing, Frail Thing ! dumb and weak and thin,
 Although thou ne'er dost utter sigh, thou'rt shadowed with
 a sin ;

Thy minnie scorns to suckle thee, thy minnie is an elf,
 Upon a bed of rose's-leaves she lies and fans herself ;
 And though my heart is aching so for one afar from me,
 I often look into thy face, and drop a tear for thee ;
 And I am but a peasant born, a lowly cotter's wife,
 Pale Thing, Frail Thing ! sucking at my life !

V.

Weak Thing, Meek Thing ! take no blame from me,
 Although my babe may fade for lack of what I give to thee ;

For though thou art a stranger thing, and though thou art
my woe,
To feel thee sucking at my breast is all the joy I know.
It soothes me, though afar away I hear my daughter call :
My heart were broken if I felt no little lips at all !
If I had none to tend at all, to be its nurse and slave,
Weak Thing, Meek Thing ! I should shriek and rave !

VI.

Bright Eyes, Light Eyes ! lying on my knee !
If soon I be not taken back unto mine own countree,
To feel my own babe's little lips, as I am feeling thine,
To smooth the golden threads of hair, to see the blue eyes
shine,—
I'll lean my head against the wall and close my weary
eyes,
And think my own babe draws the milk with balmy pants
and sighs,
And smile and bless my little one, and sweetly pass away,
Bright Eyes, Light Eyes ! Daughter of a Fay !

Algernon Charles Swinburne.

CHORUS.

(From "ATALANTA IN CALYDON.")

WHEN the hounds of spring are on winter's traces,
The mother of months in meadow or plain
Fills the shadows and windy places
With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain ;

And the brown bright nightingale amorous
Is half assuaged for Itylus,
For the Thracian ships and the foreign faces,
 The tongueless vigil, and all the pain.

Come with bows bent and with emptying of quivers,
 Maiden most perfect, lady of light,
With a noise of winds and many rivers,
 With a clamour of waters, and with might ;
Bind on thy sandals, O thou most fleet,
Over the splendour and speed of thy feet
For the faint east quickens, the wan west shivers,
 Round the feet of the day and the feet of the night.

Where shall we find her, how shall we sing to her,
 Fold our hands round her knees, and cling ?
O that man's heart were as fire and could spring to her,
 Fire, or the strength of the streams that spring !
For the stars and the winds are unto her
As raiment, as songs of the harp-player ;
For the risen stars and the fallen cling to her,
 And the southwest-wind and the west-wind sing.

For winter's rains and ruins are over,
 And all the season of snows and sins ;
The days dividing lover and lover,
 The light that loses, the night that wins ;
And time remembered is grief forgotten,
And frosts are slain and flowers begotten,
And in green underwood and cover
 Blossom by blossom the spring begins.

The full streams feed on flower of rushes,
 Ripe grasses trammel a travelling foot,

The faint fresh flame of the young year flushes
 From leaf to flower and flower to fruit ;
 And fruit and leaf are as gold and fire,
 And the oat is heard above the lyre,
 And the hoofed heel of a satyr crushes
 The chestnut-husk at the chestnut-root.

And Pan by noon and Bacchus by night,
 Fleeter of foot than the fleet-foot kid,
 Follows with dancing and fills with delight
 The Mænad and the Bassarid ;
 And soft as lips that laugh and hide
 The laughing leaves of the trees divide,
 And screen from seeing and leave in sight
 The god pursuing, the maiden hid.

The ivy falls with the Bacchanal's hair
 Over her eyebrows hiding her eyes ;
 The wild vine slipping down leaves bare
 Her bright breast shortening into sighs ;
 The wild vine slips with the weight of its leaves
 But the berried ivy catches and cleaves
 To the limbs that glitter, the feet that scare
 The wolf that follows, the fawn that flies.

CHORUS.

BEFORE the beginning of years
 There came to the making of man
 Time, with a gift of tears ;
 Grief, with a glass that ran ;

Pleasure, with pain for leaven ;
Summer, with flowers that fell ;
Remembrance fallen from heaven,
And madness risen from hell ;
Strength without hands to smite ;
Love that endures for a breath ;
Night, the shadow of light,
And life, the shadow of death.

And the high gods took in hand
Fire, and the falling of tears,
And a measure of sliding sand
From under the feet of the years ;
And froth and drift of the sea ;
And dust of the labouring earth ;
And bodies of things to be
In the houses of death and of birth ;
And wrought with weeping and laughter,
And fashioned with loathing and love,
With life before and after
And death beneath and above,
For a day and a night and a morrow,
That his strength might endure for a span
With travail and heavy sorrow,
The holy spirit of man.

From the winds of the north and the south
They gathered as unto strife ;
They breathed upon his mouth,
They filled his body with life ;
Eyesight and speech they wrought
For the veils of the soul therein,

A time for labour and thought,
 A time to serve and to sin ;
 They gave him light in his ways,
 And love, and a space for delight,
 And beauty and length of days,
 And night, and sleep in the night.
 His speech is a burning fire ;
 With his lips he travaileth ;
 In his heart is a blind desire,
 In his eyes foreknowledge of death ;
 He weaves, and is clothed with derision ;
 Sows, and he shall not reap ;
 His life is a watch or a vision
 Between a sleep and a sleep.

CHORUS.

WE have seen thee, O Love, thou art fair ; thou art
 gaily, O Love ;
 Thy wings make light in the air as the wings of a dove.
 Thy feet are as winds that divide the stream of the sea ;
 Earth is thy covering to hide thee, the garment of thee.
 Thou art swift and subtle and blind as a flame of fire ;
 Before thee the laughter, behind thee the tears of desire :
 And twain go forth beside thee, a man with a maid ;
 Her eyes are the eyes of a bride whom delight makes afraid ;
 As the breath in the buds that stir is her bridal breath :
 But Fate is the name of her ; and his name is Death.

For an evil blossom was born
 Of sea-foam and the frothing of blood,

Blood-red and bitter of fruit,
And the seed of it laughter and tears,
And the leaves of it madness and scorn ;
A bitter flower from the bud,
Sprung of the sea without root,
Sprung without graft from the years.

The weft of the world was untorn
That is woven of the day on the night,
The hair of the hours was not white,
Nor the raiment of time overworn,
When a wonder, a world's delight,
A perilous goddess was born ;
And the waves of the sea as she came
Clove, and the foam at her feet,
Fawning, rejoiced to bring forth
A fleshly blossom, a flame
Filling the heavens with heat
To the cold white ends of the north.
And in air the clamorous birds,
And men upon earth that hear
Sweet articulate words
Sweetly divided apart,
And in shallow and channel and mere
The rapid and footless herds,
Rejoiced, being foolish of heart.
For all they said upon earth,
She is fair, she is white like a dove,
And the life of the world in her breath
Breathes, and is born at her birth :
For they knew thee for mother of love,
And knew thee not mother of death.

What hadst thou to do being born,
Mother, when winds were at ease,
As a flower of the spring-time of corn,
A flower of the foam of the seas ?
For bitter thou wast from thy birth,
Aphrodite, a mother of strife ;
For before thee some rest was on earth,
A little respite from tears,
A little pleasure of life ;
For life was not then as thou art,
But as one that waxeth in years
Sweet-spoken, a fruitful wife ;
Earth had no thorn, and desire
To sting, neither death any dart ;
What hadst thou to do among these,
Thou, clothed with a burning fire,
Thou, girt with sorrow of heart,
Thou, sprung of the seed of the seas
As an ear from a seed of corn,
As a brand plucked forth of a pyre
As a ray shed forth of the morn,
For division of soul and disease,
For a dart and a sting and a thorn ?
What siled thee then to be born ?
Was there not evil enough,
Mother, and anguish on earth
Born with a man at his birth,
Wastes underfoot, and above
Storm out of heaven, and dearth .
Snaken down from the shining thereof,
Wrecks from afar over seas
And peril of shallow and firth,

And tears that spring and increase
In the barren places of mirth,
That thou, having wings as a dove,
Being girt with desire for a girth,
That thou must come after these,
That thou must lay on him love ?

Thou shouldst not so have been born :
But death should have risen with thee,
Mother, and visible fear,
Grief, and the wringing of hands,
And noise of many that mourn ;
The smitten bosom, the knee
Bowed, and in each man's ear
A cry as of perishing lands,
A moan as of people in prison,
A tumult of infinite griefs ;
And thunder of storm on the sands,
And wailing of wives on the shore ;
And under thee newly arisen
Loud shoals and shipwrecking reefs,
Fierce air and violent light ;
Sail rent and sundering oar,
Darkness, and noises of night ;
Clashing of streams in the sea,
Wave against wave as a sword,
Clamour of currents, and foam ;
Rains making ruin on earth,
Winds that wax ravenous and roam
As wolves in a wolfish horde ;
Fruits growing faint in the tree,
And blind things dead in their birth ;

Famine, and blighting of corn,
When thy time was come to be born.

All these we know of; but thee
Who shall discern or declare?
In the uttermost ends of the sea
The light of thine eyelids and hair,
The light of thy bosom as fire
Between the wheel of the sun
And the flying flames of the air?
Wilt thou turn thee not yet nor have pity,
But abide with despair and desire,
And the crying of armies undone,
Lamentation of one with another,
And breaking of city by city;
The dividing of friend against friend,
The severing of brother and brother;
Wilt thou utterly bring to an end?
Have mercy, mother!

For against all men from of old
Thou hast set thine hand as a curse,
And cast out gods from their places.
These things are spoken of thee.
Strong kings and goodly with gold
Thou hast found out arrows to pierce,
And made their kingdoms and races
As dust and surf of the sea.
All these, overburdened with woes.
And with length of their days waxen weak,
Thou slewest; and sentest moreover
Upon Tyro an evil thing,

Rent hair and a fetter and blows
Making bloody the flower of the cheek,
Though she lay by a god as a lover,
Though fair, and the seed of a king.
For of old, being full of thy fire,
She endured not longer to wear
On her bosom a saffron vest,
On her shoulder an ashwood quiver ;
Being mixed and made one through desire,
With Enipeus, and all her hair
Made moist with his mouth, and her breast
Filled full of the foam of the river.

CHORUS.

WHO hath given man speech ? or who hath set therein
A thorn for peril and a snare for sin ?
For in the word his life is and his breath,
And in the word his death,
That madness and the infatuate heart may breed
From the word's womb the deed
And life bring one thing forth ere all pass by,
Even one thing which is ours yet cannot die—
Death. Hast thou seen him ever anywhere,
Time's twin-born brother, imperishable as he
Is perishable and plaintive, clothed with care
And mutable as sand,
But death is strong and full of blood, and fair
And perdurable, and like a lord of land ?
Nay, time thou seest not, death thou wilt not see
Till life's right hand be loosened from thine hand

And thy life-days from thee.
For the gods very subtly fashion
 Madness with sadness upon earth :
Not knowing in any wise compassion,
 Nor holding pity of any worth ;
And many things they have given and taken,
 And wrought and ruined many things ;
The firm land have they loosed and shaken,
 And sealed the sea with all her springs ;
They have wearied time with heavy burdens,
 And vexed the lips of life with breath :
Set men to labour and given them guerdons,
 Death, and great darkness after death :
Put moans into the bridal measure,
 And on the bridal wools a stain ;
And circled pain about with pleasure,
 And girdled pleasure about with pain ;
And strewed one marriage-bed with tears and fire
For extreme loathing and supreme desire.

What shall be done with all these tears of ours ?
 Shall they make water-springs in the fair heaven
To bathe the brows of morning ? or like flowers
 Be shed and shine before the starriest hours,
 Or made the raiment of the weeping Seven ?
Or rather, O our masters, shall they be
Food for the famine of the grievous sea,
 A great well-head of lamentation
Satiating the sad gods ? or fall and flow
 Among the years and seasons, to and fro,
 And wash their feet with tribulation,
And fill them full with grieving ere they go ?

Alas, our lords, and yet alas again,
Seeing all your iron heaven is gilt as gold,
But all we smite thereat in vain ;
Smite the gates barred with groanings manifold,
But all the floors are paven with our pain.
Yea, and with weariness of lips and eyes,
With breaking of the bosom, and with sighs,
We labour, and are clad and fed with grief,
And filled with days we would not fain behold,
And nights we would not hear of ; we wax old,
All we wax old and wither like a leaf.
We are outcast, strayed between bright sun and moon ;
Our light and darkness are as leaves of flowers,
Black flowers and white, that perish ; and the noon
As midnight, and the night as daylight hours.
A little fruit a little while is ours,
And the worm finds it soon.

But up in heaven the high gods one by one
Lay hands upon the draught that quickeneth,
Fulfilled with all tears shed and all things done,
And stir with soft imperishable breath
The bubbling bitterness of life and death,
And hold it to our lips and laugh ; but they
Preserve their lips from tasting night or day,
Lest they too change and sleep, the fates that spun,
The lips that made us and the hands that slay ;
Lest all these change, and heaven bow down to none,
Change and be subject to the secular sway
And terrene revolution of the sun.
Therefore they thrust it from them, putting time away.
I would the wine of time, made sharp and sweet

With multitudinous days and nights and tears
And many-mixing savours of strange years,
Were no more trodden of them under feet,
Cast out and spilt about their holy places :
That life were given them as a fruit to eat,
And death to drink as water ; that the light
Might ebb, drawn backward from their eyes, and night
 Hide for one hour the imperishable faces ;
That they might rise up sad in heaven, and know
Sorrow and sleep, one paler than young snow,
 One cold as blight of dew and ruinous rain ;
Rise up and rest and suffer a little, and be
Awhilē as all things born with us and we,
 And grieve as men, and like slain men be slain.

For now we know not of them ; but one saith
 The gods are gracious, praising God : and one,
When hast thou seen ? or hast thou felt his breath
 Touch, nor consume thine eyelids as the sun,
Nor fill thee to the lips with fiery death ?
 None hath beheld him, none
Seen above other gods and shapes of things,
Swift without feet and flying without wings,
Intolerable, not clad with death or life,
 Insatiable, not known of night or day,
The lord of love and loathing and of strife
 Who gives a star and takes a sun away ;
Who shapes the soul, and makes her a barren wife
 To the earthly body and grievous growth of clay ;
Who turns the large limbs to a little flame
 And binds the great sea with a little sand ;
Who makes desire, and slays desire with shame ;

Who shakes the heaven as ashes in his hand ;
Who, seeing the light and shadow for the same,
 Bids day waste night as fire devours a brand,
Smites without sword, and scourges without rod ;
 The supreme evil, God.

Yea, with thine hate, O God, thou hast covered us,
 One saith, and hidden our eyes away from sight,
And made us transitory and hazardous,
 Light things and slight ;
Yet have men praised thee, saying, He hath made man th s,
 And he doeth right.
Thou hast kissed us, and hast smitten ; thou hast laid
Upon us with thy left hand life, and said,
Live : and again thou hast said, Yield up your breath,
And with thy right hand laid upon us death.
Thou hast sent us sleep, and stricken sleep with dreams,
 Saying, Joy is not, but love of joy shall be ;
Thou hast made sweet springs for all the pleasant streams,
 In the end thou hast made them bitter with the sea.
Thou hast fed one rose with dust of many men ;
 Thou hast marred one face with fire of many tears ;
Thou hast taken love, and given us sorrow again ;
 With pain thou hast filled us full to the eyes and ears.
Therefore because thou art strong, our father, and we
 Feeble ; and thou art against us, and thine hand
Constrains us in the shallows of the sea,
 And breaks us at the limits of the land ;
Because thou hast bent thy lightnings as a bow,
 And loosed the hours like arrows ; and let fall
Sins and wild words and many a wingèd woe
 And wars among us, and one end of all ;

Because thou hast made the thunder, and thy feet
Are as a rushing water when the skies
Break, but thy face as an exceeding heat
And flames of fire the eyelids of thine eyes ;
Because thou art over all who are over us ;
Because thy name is life, and our name death ;
Because thou art cruel, and men are piteous,
And our hands labour, and thine hand scattereth ;—
Lo, with hearts rent and knees made tremulous,
Lo, with ephemeral lips and casual breath,
At least we witness of thee ere we die
That these things are not otherwise, but thus ;
That each man in his heart sigheth, and saith,
That all men even as I,
All we are against thee, against thee, O God most high.

But ye, keep ye on earth
Your lips from over-speech,
Loud words and longing are so little worth ;
And the end is hard to reach.
For silence after grievous things is good,
And reverence, and the fear that makes men whole,
And shame, and righteous governance of blood,
And lordship of the soul.
But from sharp words and wits men pluck no fruit,
And gathering thorns they shake the tree at root ;
For words divide and rend ;
But silence is most noble till the end.

C H O R U S.

O THAT I now, I too were
By deep wells and water-floods,
Streams of ancient hills, and where
All the wan green places bear
Blossoms cleaving to the sod,
Fruitless fruit, and grasses fair,
Or such darkest ivy-buds
As divide thy yellow hair,
Bacchus, and their leaves that nod
Round thy fawnskin brush the bare
Snow-soft shoulders of a god ;
There the year is sweet, and there
Earth is full of secret springs,
And the fervent rose-cheeked hours,
Those that marry dawn and noon,
There are sunless, there look pale
In dim leaves and hidden air,
Pale as grass or latter flowers
Or the wild vine's wan wet rings
Full of dew beneath the moon,
And all day the nightingale
Sleeps, and all night sings ;
There in cold remote recesses
That nor alien eyes assail,
Feet, nor imminence of wings,
Nor a wind nor any tune,
Thou, O queen and holiest,
Flower the whitest of all things,
With reluctant lengthening tresses

And with sudden splendid breast
Save of maidens un beholden,
There art wont to enter, there
Thy divine swift limbs and golden
Maiden growth of unbound hair,
Bathed in waters white,
Shine, and many a maid's by thee
In moist woodland or the hilly
Flowerless brakes where wells abound
Out of all men's sight ;
Or in lower pools that see
All their marges clothed all round
With the innumerable lily,
Whence the golden-girdled bee
Flits through flowering rush to fret
White or duskier violet,
Fair as those that in far years
With their buds left luminous
And their little leaves made wet
From the warmer dew of tears,
Mother's tears in extreme need,
Hid the limbs of Iamus,
Of thy brother's seed ;
For his heart was piteous
Toward him, even as thine heart now
Pitiful toward us ;
Thine, O goddess, turning hither
A benignant blameless brow ;
Seeing enough of evil done
And lives withered as leaves wither
In the blasting of the sun ;
Seeing enough of hunters dead,

Ruin enough of all our year,
Herds and harvests slain and shed,
Herdsmen stricken many a one,
Fruits and flocks consumed together,
And great length of deadly days.
Yet with reverent lips and fear
Turn we toward thee, turn and praise
For this lightening of clear weather
And prosperities begun.
For not seldom, when all air
As bright water without breath
Shines, and when men fear not, fate
Without thunder unaware
Breaks and brings down death.
Joy with grief ye great gods give,
Good with bad, and overbear
All the pride of us that live,
All the high estate,
As ye long since overbore,
As in old time long before,
Many a strong man and a great,
All that were.
But do thou, sweet, otherwise,
Having heed of all our prayer,
Taking note of all our sighs ;
We beseech thee by thy light,
By thy bow, and thy sweet eyes,
And the kingdom of the night,
Be thou favourable and fair ;
By thine arrows and thy might,
And Orion overthrown ;
By the maiden thy delight,

By the indissoluble zone
And the sacred hair.

CHORUS.

MELEAGER.

LET your hands meet
Round the weight of my head ;
Lift ye my feet
As the feet of the dead ;
For the flesh of my body is molten, the limbs of it molten
as lead.

CHORUS.

O thy luminous face,
Thine imperious eyes !
O the grief, O the grace,
As of day when it dies !

Who is this bending over thee, lord, with tears and suppression of sighs ?

MELEAGER.

Is a bride so fair ?
Is a maid so meek ?
With unchapleted hair,
With unfilleted cheek,

Atalanta, the pure among women, whose name is as blessing to speak.

ATALANTA.

I would that with feet
Unsandalled, unshod,

Overbold, overfleet,
I had swum not nor trod
From Arcadia to Calydon northward, a blast of the envy
of God!

MELEAGER.

Unto each man his fate ;
Unto each as he saith
In whose fingers the weight
Of the world is as breath ;
Yet I would that in clamour of battle mine hands nad laid
hold upon death.

CHORUS.

Not with cleaving of shields
And their clash in thine ear,
When the lord of fought fields
Breaketh spearshaft from spear,
Thou art broken, our lord, thou art broken, with travail
and labour and fear.

MELEAGER.

Would God he had found me
Beneath fresh boughs !
Would God he had bound me
Unawares in mine house,
With light in mine eyes, and songs in my lips, and a crown
on my brows !

CHORUS.

Whence art thou sent from us
Whither thy goal ?
How art thou rent from us,
Thou that wert whole,

As with severing of eyelids and eyes, as with sundering of body and soul !

MELEAGER.

My heart is within me
 As an ash in the fire ;
 Whosoever hath seen me,
 - Without lute, without lyre,
 Shall sing of me grievous things, even things that were in
 to desire.

CHORUS.

Who shall raise thee
 From the house of the dead ?
 Or what man praise thee
 That thy praise may be said ?
 Alas thy beauty ! alas thy body ! alas thine head !

MELEAGER.

But thou, O mother, . . .
 The dreamer of dreams,
 Wilt thou bring forth another
 To feel the sun's beams
 When I move among shadows a shadow, and wail by im-
 passable streams ?

CENEUS.

What thing wilt thou leave me
 Now this thing is done ?
 A man wilt thou give me,
 A son for my son,
 For the light of mine eyes, the desire of my life, the desi-
 rable one ?

CHORUS.

Thou wert glad above others,
Yea, fair beyond word ;
Thou wert glad among mothers ;
For each man that heard
Of thee, praise there was added unto thee, as wings to the
feet of a bird.

CENEUS.

Who shall give back
Thy face of old years,
With travail made black,
Grown gray among fears,
Mother of sorrow, mother of cursing, mother of tears ?

MELEAGER.

Though thou art as fire
Fed with fuel in vain,
My delight, my desire,
Is more chaste than the rain,
More pure than the dewfall, more holy than stars are that
live without stain.

ATALANTA.

I would that as water
My life's blood had thawn,
Or as winter's wan daughter
Leaves lowland and lawn
Spring-stricken, or ever mine eyes had beheld thee made
dark in thy dawn.

CHORUS.

When thou dravest the men
Of the chosen of Thrace,

None turned him again
 Nor endured he thy face
 Clothed round with the blush of the battle, with light from
 a terrible place.

CENEUS.

Thou shouldst die as he dies
 For whom none sheddeth tears ;
 Filling thine eyes
 And fulfilling thine ears
 With the brilliance of battle, the bloom and the beauty,
 the splendour of spears.

CHORUS.

In the ears of the world
 It is sung, it is told,
 And the light thereof hurled
 And the noise thereof rolled
 From the Acroceraunian snow to the ford of the fleece of
 gold.

MELEAGER.

Would God ye could carry me
 Forth of all these ;
 Heap sand and bury me
 By the Chersonese
 Where the thundering Bosphorus answers the thunder of
 Pontic seas !

CENEUS.

Dost thou mock at our praise
 And the singing begun,
 And the men of strange days
 Praising my son
 In the folds of the hills of home, high places of Calydon ?

MELEAGER

For the dead man no home is ;
 Ah ! better to be
 What the flower of the foam is
 In fields of the sea,
 That the sea-waves might be as my raiment, the gulf-
 stream a garment for me.

CHORUS.

Who shall seek thee and bring
 And restore thee thy day,
 When the dove dipped her wing
 And the oars won their way,
 Where the narrowing Symplegades whitened the straits of
 Propontis with spray ?

MELEAGER.

Will ye crown me my tomb
 Or exalt me my name,
 Now my spirits consume,
 Now my flesh is a flame ?
 Let the sea slake it once, and men speak of me sleeping to
 praise me or shame.

CHORUS.

Turn back now, turn thee,
 As who turns him to wake ;
 Though the life in thee burn thee,
 Couldst thou bathe it and slake
 Where the sea-ridge of Helle hangs heavier, and east upon
 west waters break ?

MELEAGER.

Would the winds blow me back
 Or the waves hurl me home ?
 Ah, to touch in the track
 Where the pine learned to roam
 Cold girdles and crowns of the sea-gods, cool blossoms of
 water and foam !

CHORUS.

The gods may release
 That they made fast ;
 Thy soul shall have ease
 In thy limbs at the last ;
 But what shall they give thee for life, sweet life that is
 overpast ?

MELEAGER.

Not the life of men's veins,
 Not of flesh that conceives ;
 But the grace that remains,
 The fair beauty that cleaves
 To the life of the rains in the grasses, the life of the dews
 on the leaves.

CHORUS.

Thou wert helmsman and chief ;
 Wilt thou turn in an hour,
 Thy limbs to the leaf,
 Thy face to the flower,
 Thy blood to the water, thy soul to the gods who divide
 and devour ?

MELEAGER.

The years are hungry,
They wail all their days ;
The gods wax angry
And weary of praise ;
And who shall bridle their lips ? and who shall straiten
their ways ?

CHORUS.

The gods guard over us
With sword and with rod ;
Weaving shadow to cover us,
Heaping the sod,
That law may fulfil herself wholly, to darken man's face
before God.

THE END.

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